

Transforming the Value of Networks

How service providers can grow margin in an era of commoditisation



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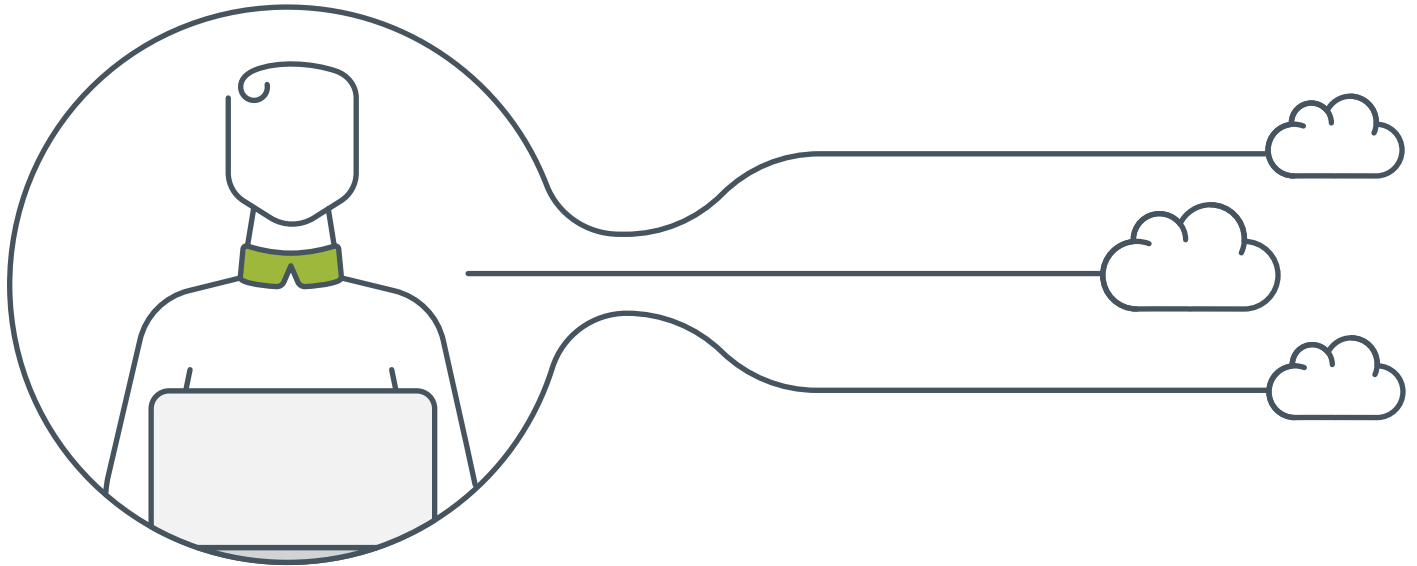
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Transforming the Value of Networks

How service providers can grow margin in an era of commoditisation



Network commoditisation is an ongoing reality that *MSPs* need to understand and deal with. Devising strategies to accommodate this shift will define the future of managed services. To date, the major outcome has been squeezed margins and increased churn, while service providers make attempts at diversification. Creating new streams of revenue will certainly be part of the answer. But is there another option?

Realistically, commoditisation is the product of success. As a market matures, competition grows, production is simplified and the basic outcomes end up being taken for granted. We see this process in every industry in which commoditisation takes hold.

There are two questions that we need to answer:

1. Are all network services destined to be commoditised?
2. Is there any way to differentiate within a commodity market and grow margin with a commodity product?

While it's likely that all network services will be commoditised to an extent, there are certainly ways to differentiate a commodity. Generally speaking, that comes down to selling something else — something bundled with, and in addition to, that commodity.

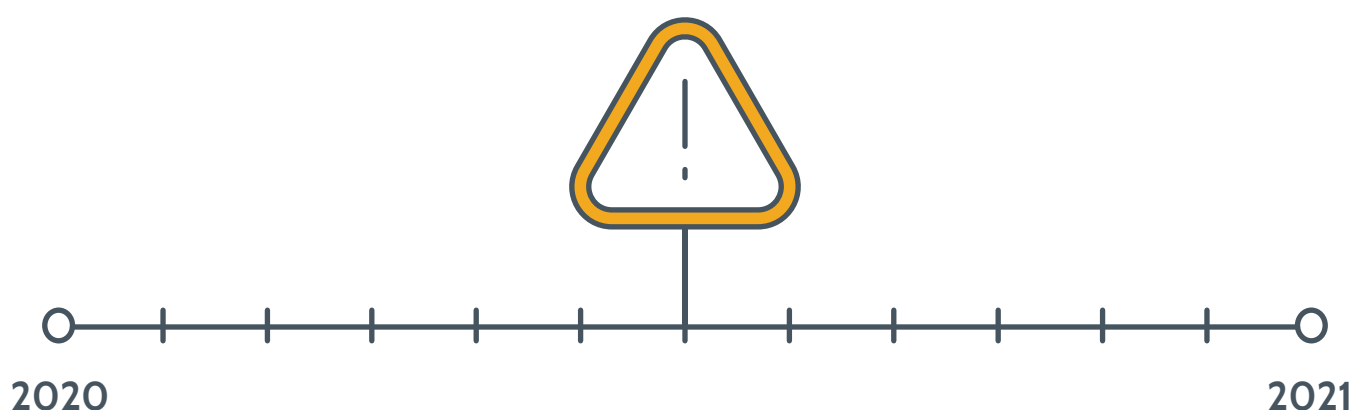
A critical moment

2020 has been a year of disruption.

It's accelerated the adoption of remote workspaces, cloud computing, and digital-first business strategies. Every aspect of modern business depends on the network, and never before have service providers been so critical to commercial success.

It's been said over and over again — a “new normal” is being formed. But the gravity of this statement should not be lost. Society as a whole will look different after COVID-19.

MSPs should recognise that by combining new normal planning with initiatives to manage commoditisation, it's possible to form a single strategy able to deliver a better future.



“A new normal is being formed”

What this eBook will deliver

Here, we are going to provide you with a handbook for differentiation. We will explain how creating experiences, embedding yourself in customer workflows and becoming a trusted part of your customer's IT team can create a service that is more valuable than the sum of its parts.

“You need to sell the experience”

With the right perspective, insights and communication, you can make it impossible to disaggregate your network services — removing yourself from itemised price comparisons that drive commoditisation. You need to sell the “experience” of using the network and being your customer, not simply connectivity itself. This is the key to transforming the value of networks. And this report is about explaining how to get that done. Let's get started.

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Acceptance is the first stage of recovery

There is no way to single-handedly reverse the trajectory of a market. And, fundamentally, ending network commoditisation might not even be a good thing. As stated, commoditisation is a product of success. The large part of the reason that connectivity is suffering from commoditisation is that network technology is so good you can't really outcompete at the router, firewall or circuit level. Any quality difference in this "box of bits" will be so slight that it's functionally meaningless.

Service providers often actually make things worse for themselves — focusing on components, performance and modularity rather than selling holistic and interconnected outcomes. By moving towards selling services or outcomes, it becomes much harder to price compare and commoditise.

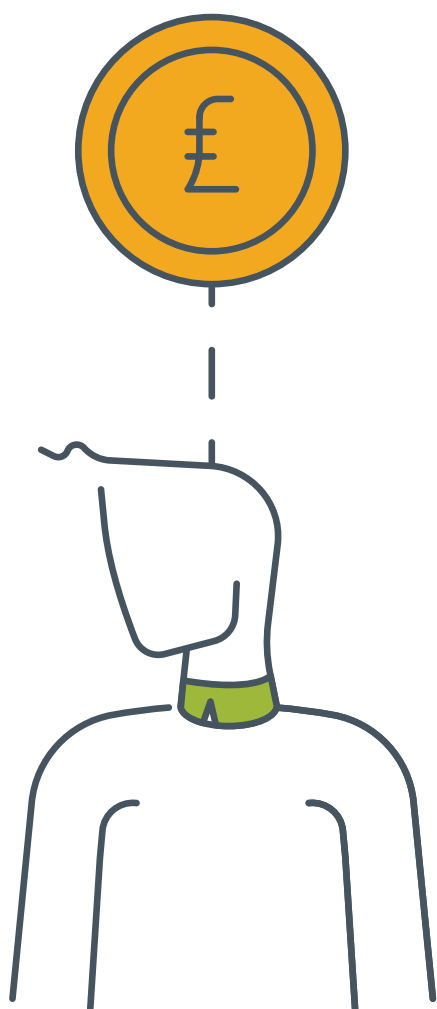
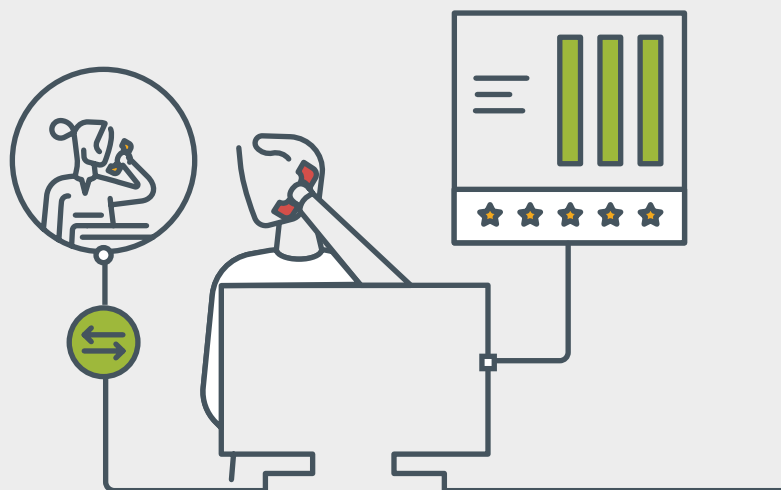
Accepting market maturity is essential to making the right decisions. Networking connectivity is "taken for granted". Once you understand that, you can develop a strategy for growth within a commoditised market.

"Networking connectivity is taken for granted"



Measuring commoditisation

More than anything, commoditisation is a state of mind. Commoditisation is the act of consumers looking at “price points” as the single most important factor when making a purchasing decision. But this mindset has some predictable outcomes in an industry that can be more directly measured. Three key factors worth watching are:



1. The average revenue per user (ARPU) spread

ARPU is the measure of the revenue generated per user or unit. The ARPU “spread” is the difference between those with the highest and lowest revenue. As a market is impacted by commoditisation, this difference narrows because customers start to look at providers interchangeably.

2. Market share spread

This is the difference between the smallest and largest shares of revenue in any market. As this figure shrinks, it demonstrates a more uniform market in which consumers see less difference between competitors.

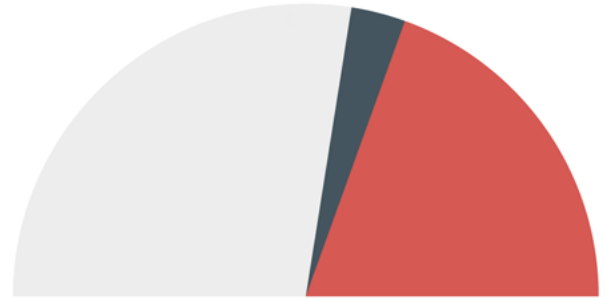
3. Marginal return

The amount of profit generated from services or products after total costs are subtracted.

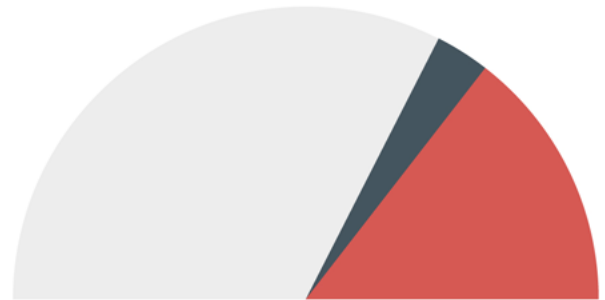
As consumers start to see price as the most important differentiating factor, marginal returns will shrink.

Together, these metrics enable you to understand how competitively differentiated the market is and how effectively consumers have been able to push prices down. If you look at these metrics within any element of IT service provision, commoditisation trends jump into focus.

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) shows that the global ARPU spread for wireless telecoms dropped from 45% to 39% between 2008 and 2018, representing a 13% change. The market share spread dropped from 35% to 29% — a 17% decline. Their conclusion: wireless service has become commoditised in 93% of the 50+ markets involved in the study. Commoditisation increased by 10% between 2006 and 2017, while the North American market experienced a commoditisation increase of 29% within the same period.



"Global ARPU spread for wireless telecoms dropped from 45% to **39%** between 2008 and 2018, representing a 13% change"



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"Wireless service has become commoditised in **93%** of the 50+ markets"



"Commoditisation increased by 10% between 2006 and 2017, while the North American market experienced a commoditisation increase of **29%** within the same period"

When commoditisation isn't everything

Although the network industry as a whole is experiencing commoditisation, there are still glimmers of a different path forward.

For example, a Service Leadership Index research report calculated that while the average profit margin for an MSP is 8%, market leaders pull off 18%.

Fundamentally, we can draw valuable lessons from other industries that have undergone commoditisation. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, we just need to apply established answers within the specific context of managed network services.



The infographic consists of two vertical bars. The left bar is red and contains the text '8%' and 'Average profit margin for an MSP'. The right bar is green and contains the text '18%' and 'Market leaders'.

8%

Average profit
margin for an MSP

18%

Market
leaders

1. The automotive industry

If you go out and buy a new car, the basic functionality of that car is taken for granted. But a platform that takes you from point A to point B isn't the only thing on sale.

For example, Ford, which is one of the largest car manufacturers in the world, pulls in about half the profit margin of BMW — 4.14% vs 9.9% respectively in Q1 2018. BMW is very successful at customer retention and brand loyalty, even though their cars cost more and have higher markups.



How commoditisation is overcome: BMW can do this because they are not just selling a “car”. Instead, they are selling the “experience” of owning a BMW. That means a wrap-around service, a dealership which takes care of you and removes hassle — picking up your car for servicing, etc. They are also selling prestige.

2. Smartphones

Smartphones are another example of a highly commoditised market that maintains high levels of differentiation. The reasons for this are broadly the same as with automobiles, but the outcomes are even more dramatic.

The vast majority of the smartphone market is made up of low-cost suppliers and the budget end of companies like Huawei, Xiaomi, OPPO and Samsung. There is not a lot of brand differentiation between budget smartphones and it's easy to find a functional phone for less than £150. But that doesn't stop select products and select brands from charging far more.

Apple captures 87% of all smartphone profits while only making 18% of all smartphone sales. And flagship phones from all different types of brands regularly sell for more than £1,000, with profit margins above 60%.

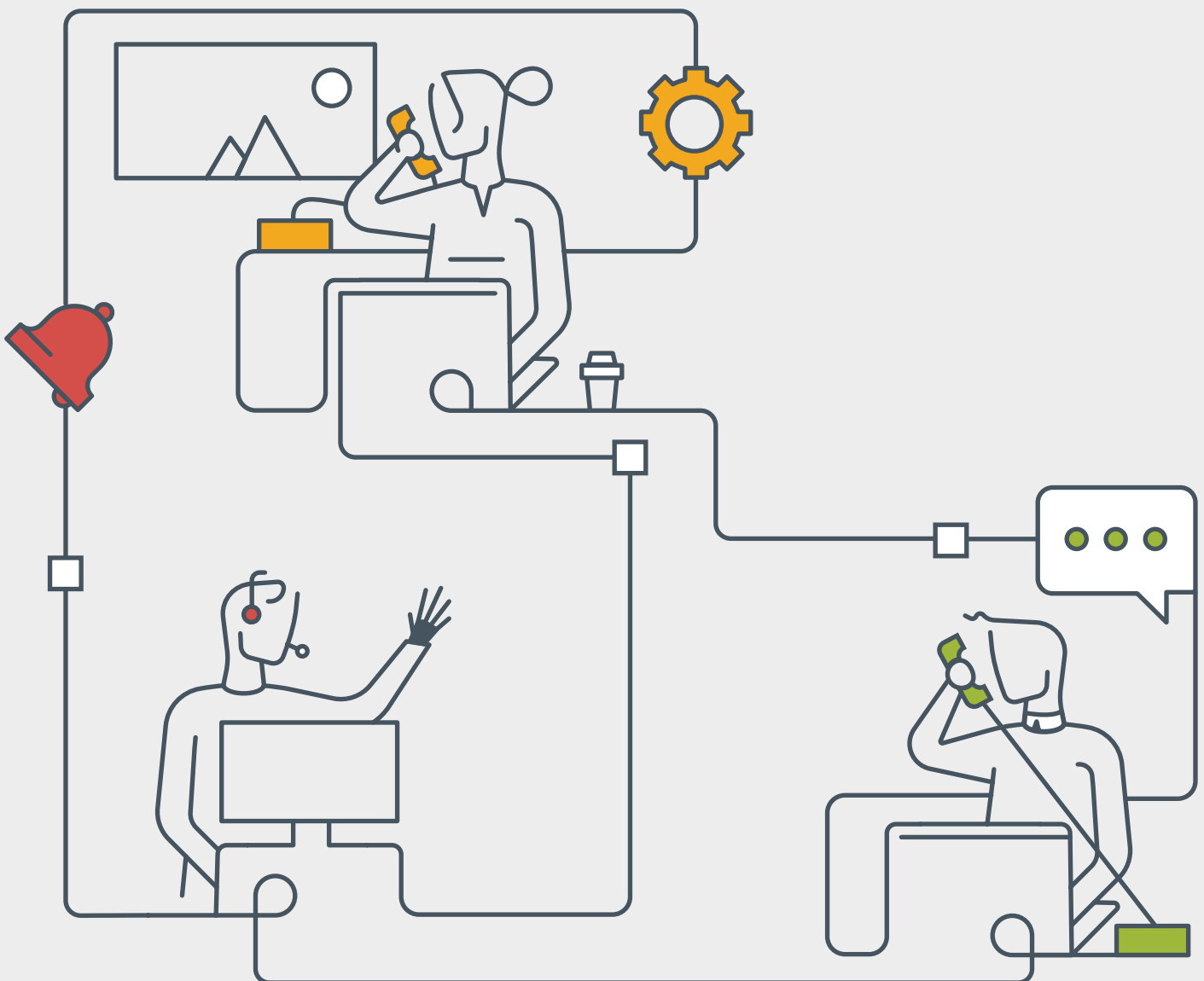
How commoditisation is overcome: Like BMW, high-end smartphones are selling something more. When you buy the latest iPhone, you aren't just buying the ability to place a call. You're buying into an ecosystem, customer support and a brand lifestyle. You are buying the experience of using that luxury device and the prestige that comes along with it.



Selling more than a commodity

In summary, differentiation within an otherwise commoditised market requires selling something more desirable wrapped around that commodity. You aren't selling components or generic outcomes. You are selling a value-added experience, convenience and/or branding.

“If you want to differentiate yourself as a service provider, you need to identify the characteristics of luxury connectivity”



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Building value around experiences

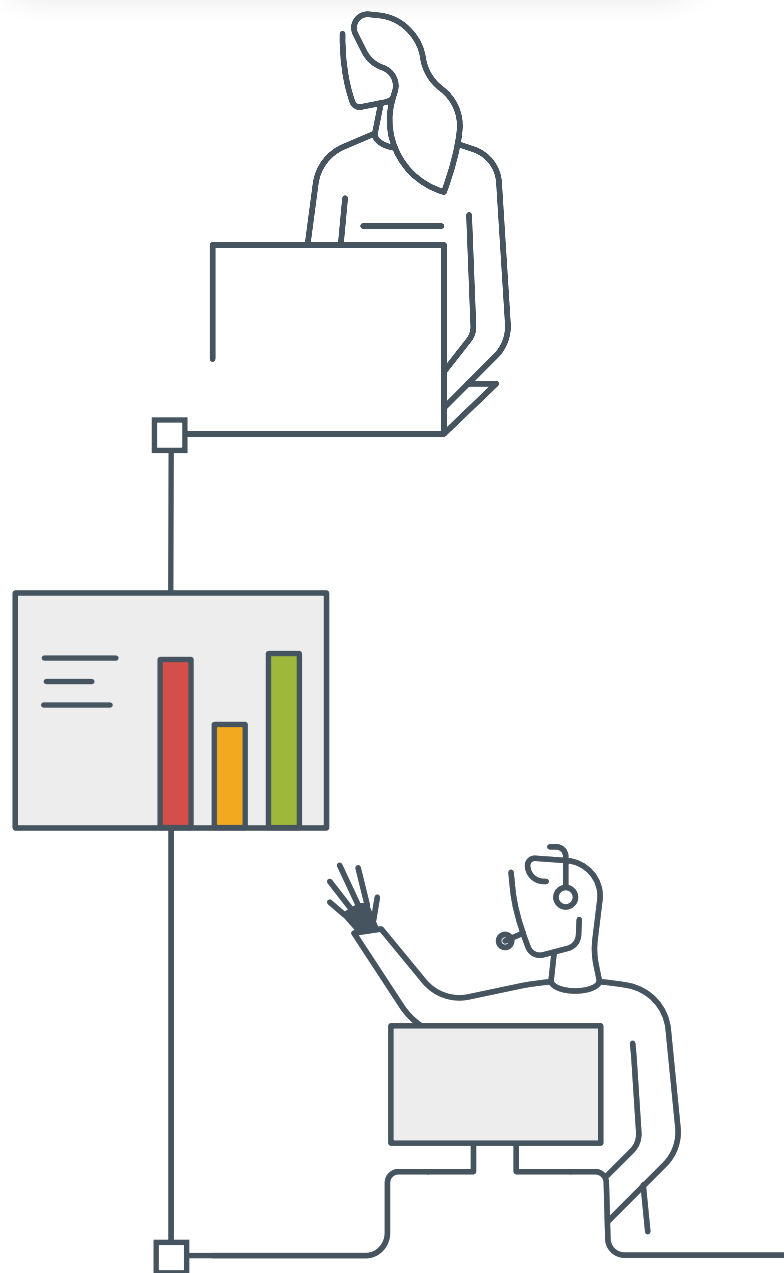
Back-end B2B technology isn't flashy, and "prestige" doesn't play the same role in differentiation as it does with luxury B2C commodities. But what matters in both B2C and B2B markets is customer experience. The experience of a car dealership that provides inclusive services; the experience of using a specific operating system; the experience of high-end additional features.

For a communications network, that experience is the overall experience of the customer as they buy connectivity from you, and how they engage with you as an MSP.

Remember: without the network, nothing works. Customers spend a lot of time managing that connectivity, even with the help of an MSP. This is where you have an opportunity to integrate yourself into your customers' workflows, become a trusted virtual member of their IT team, add value, and create experiences that make you indispensable.

If you want to create a differentiated experience and become that trusted partner, you need to understand what customers want from an MSP experience. We've distilled this into six central pillars.

Note: Some of this may seem obvious. But it's a good exercise to audit your business against these pillars and see how well you're really doing.



1. Flawless delivery

Commodity products are expected to work. First and foremost, you need to make sure you can deliver on this expectation. Connectivity is the backbone of many organisations. Every part of the infrastructure must work smoothly to enable organisations to attain their everyday goals. Teams within these organisations need to work smarter and faster with minimal incidents.

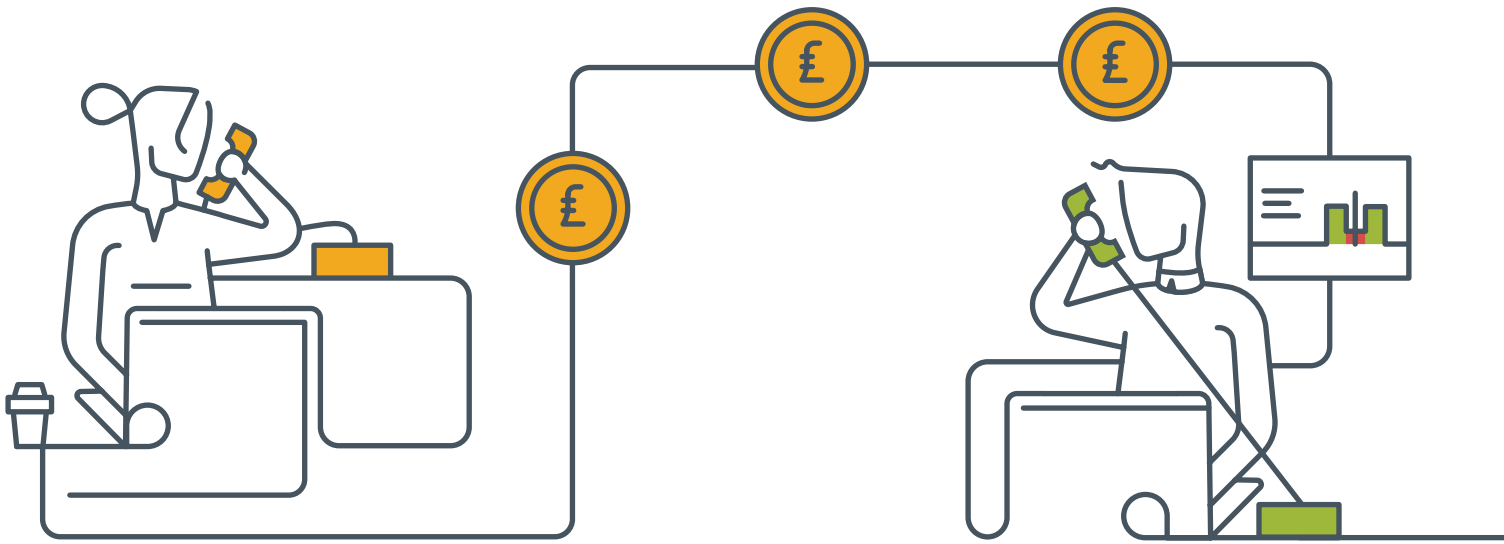
Like BMW, MSPs should focus on ensuring the flawless delivery of services within inclusive and convenient solutions which take care of problems before they occur. Your business should be about delivering peace of mind and quality outcomes. You need the ability to:

- Spot problems before they impact customers
- Proactively resolve issues without interrupting connectivity
- Communicate these assurances reliably to customers



Note: You might think you are doing these three things, but it's surprising how many MSPs just focus on "proactive resolution without interrupting connectivity", and forget about communication and early detection.

As a service provider, it's possible to pay attention to other aspects of IT, such as security, collaboration, and unified communications. Yet, the primary enabling component for all these aspects is still the underlying connectivity, the network.



2. Predictable and controllable costs

If customers are not kept in the loop, an expensive and unexpected bill can sour relationships. You need to make sure that you communicate costs effectively and price services in a way that is friendly to customers. Some of that comes down to the pricing model you chose, and length of the contract. But those specifics will vary on a case-by-case basis.

Pro tip: Long-term contracts can appear to provide a degree of predictability. But our experience is that customers don't like them. Binding customers into long-term agreements because they forget to cancel is not a good strategy to improve customer-experiences.

No matter what pricing model you use (per-hour pricing, inclusive pricing or modular pricing), an effective **price control platform** will significantly improve customer experiences working with you by increasing

transparency and visibility. This is particularly true for modular pricing, and a third-party tool can help you side-step the arduous process of building a pricing tool yourself.

Fundamentally, customer-facing platforms integrate you (and your services) into your customers' workflow. For example, a quality customer portal can enable the easy review of projected and past costs, and allow customers to set budgets, prioritise spending and remain in control of costs. Wherever this is possible, it creates a differentiated experience of being your customer that adds value.

The bottom line: The more you can build in predictability from the start, the better. But perhaps even more important is your ability to transparently and seamlessly communicate costs to customers, and let them set priorities and remain in control.

3. Easy awareness of status and behaviour

Just as customers want to understand their costs, they want to understand what you are doing, how their networks are performing, and where changes need to be made. They want to be able to access SLAs and compare those points against outcomes. But they want the ability to do this without dredging through technical reports or being overwhelmed by notifications and alerts.

Most MSPs are good at providing information but struggle with the second half of the equation — accessibility.

Traditional monitoring tools, for example, are great at pulling loads of data, but very bad at presenting that in a way that is intelligible if you don't already know what you're looking for. As a result, that information tends to stay siloed in the engineering team, and doesn't reach others who could use it to build stronger customer relationships.

Creating a differentiated experience requires simple notifications that provide valuable and comprehensible information about core functions.

"As a result, that information tends to stay siloed in the engineering team, and doesn't reach others who could use it to build stronger customer relationships"

Having a dedicated customer service strategy is key to keeping your customers informed about the behaviour and status of their network systems. Providing access to intuitive and non-technical reporting tools is critical to making this a truly seamless process. Again, like with cost control platforms, by providing customers with integrated management software, you add differentiated value to the experience of being your customer.

However, you shouldn't simply leave customers to their own devices. Even where you are able to provide self-service tools, it's worth sending incident reports as reminders about issues that need to be addressed. However, make sure you are doing this tactfully and with purpose.

In all instances, reports need to be easily understood and straightforward.

4. Future-proofed services

Over time, the needs of your customers are likely to grow, and you need to be able to grow with them. Not only that, you need to make that process seamless and easy. The right communication and reporting functionality will go a long way, but you need to be

prepared across the board. Offering future-proofed services means you're able to meet their new demands without compromising the quality of your services. This needs to expand across a number of different dimensions, including:

Functional

The ability to add new features and functionality to your systems.

Geographic

Regardless of your client's geographic expansion, you should be able to handle their more distributed needs.

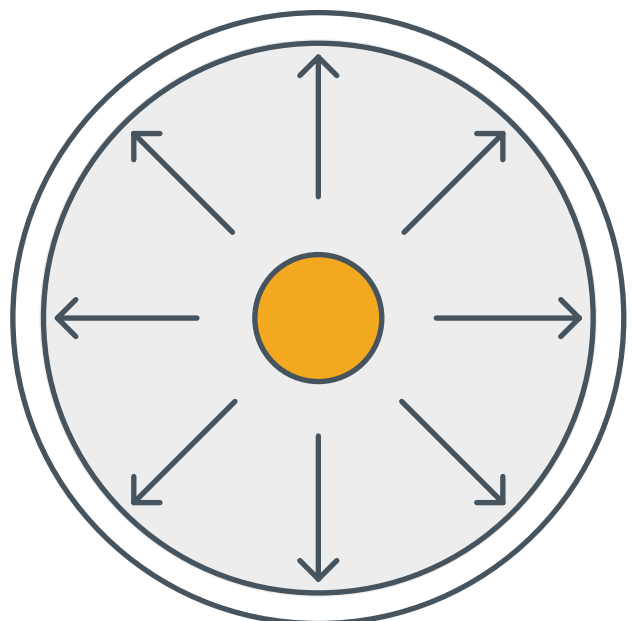
Load

The ability for an MSP to expand its resource pool to accommodate their clients' heavier loads.

Your products, services and environment need to be scalable. You need to have adequate capacity and equipment to handle new needs without affecting other operations or clients. MSPs need to develop systems that work for clients now, and that can be upgraded to accommodate more users, higher network traffic, and more hardware in the future.

Providing an end-to-end solution gives clients confidence and peace of mind that your solution will meet their needs when they need to scale their operations. Again, you need the ability to communicate scaling requirements, demonstrate the value, and then seamlessly execute those plans.

“Your products, services and environment need to be scalable”



5. Predictive maintenance

Regular maintenance of network systems is vital to ensure the seamless running of clients' networks. However, maintenance can be costly when not planned. While ongoing costs related to software updates, security measures, and general support are unavoidable, there are specific processes that need maintenance only when necessary.

As an MSP, offering predictive maintenance (PdM) to clients helps to reduce the likelihood of network failures, resulting in lower maintenance costs. Of course you can implement PdM by monitoring the network infrastructure of your clients and using data to predict quality issues or system failure. But there are better and worse ways to do this. In order to carry out effective PdM, you need data that is:

Focused

If your teams end up drowned in data, you won't be able to take the swift action necessary. You need a reporting platform that is able to focus you on the right information at the right time.

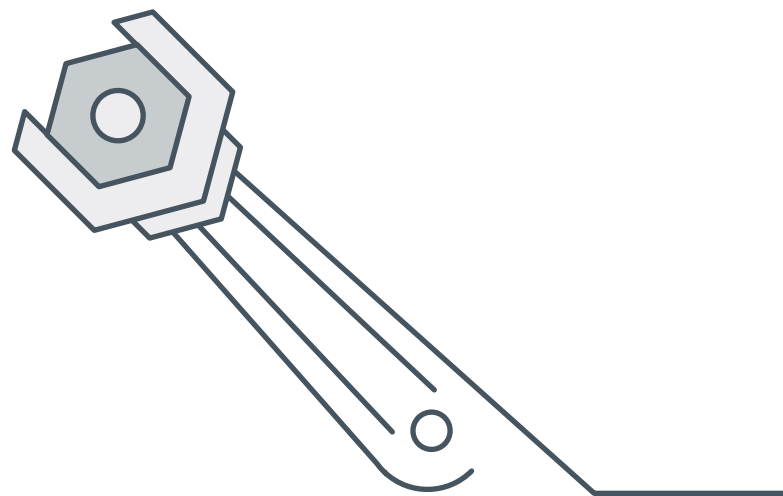
Contextualised

Data and analytics can't tell you what to do. For that, you need to contextualise analysis with real-world information. You need actionable insights, not data.

Accessible

Insights need to be clear and easily communicated internally and to your customers. That means presenting the information in a non-technical and jargon-free way.

Fundamentally, you need an insights platform that can clearly point you at actions worth taking in real-time, and help you communicate with your customers so they understand why you're doing what you are doing. This will enable you to execute the kind of predictive and proactive maintenance that will keep your customers connected and deliver a seamless network experience. The result is minimal downtime, better communication, and fewer maintenance costs — resulting in happy clients.



6. A trusted partner

50% of customers report that the primary reason for working with an MSP is to focus on “their core competencies”. What customers want out of the MSP relationship is to not have to worry about their IT. To do that, you need to operate as a trusted and virtual member of their IT team — delivering transparency, responsiveness and expertise with straightforward communication and quality outcomes.

Realistically, everything on this list will help you deliver on this sixth and critical pillar. By effectively communicating, delivering flawless outcomes and improving the workflows of your customers you can build trust and long-term relationships.

Again, the tools you deploy make a big difference. Simply communication, focused analysis and effective alert systems allow you to add value and create a differentiated experience. This sits at the heart of trust and effective long-term relationship building.



Creating a seamless experience

Minimising friction within customer relationships is important to creating positive experiences. The data-sharing required to do this will also help you pull together all of the analysis and insights needed to actually add value within customer interactions.

Technology is important to the entire process. You need tools that can make it easy for both you and your customers to actually understand data, and use it to facilitate valuable communication.

But that likely means looking beyond the capabilities of traditional monitoring tools.

Fundamentally, in order to become indispensable, it's important for MSPs to provide a platform that customers can use to review and manage their networks. These same tools make it possible for you to proactively take action, avoid endless number crunching, and focus on the insights that matter to building long-term relationships and differentiating the experience of being your customer.

Insights as a sales tool

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Insights as a sales tool

By providing your customers with transparent and simple insights about their network, you enhance that relationship and add value. However, that information has additional commercial value within your own business.

If you are able to curate effective solutions for data capture, data analysis and data interpretation, you will identify opportunities

to upsell, cross-sell and expand service delivery to your existing customers. Not only can you create value-added experiences that differentiate your service, you will find new ways to sell additional services — further driving marginal growth. This is the second half of the equation for combatting the effects of commoditisation.

1. Upselling: Maximising revenue

You have already demonstrated to your clients that you're a reliable and trusted partner. In most contexts, upselling requires less investment than customer acquisition. It drives higher margins for equally priced services.

The right insights in the hands of a creative sales team can deliver dramatic results. Imagine being able to demonstrate and visualise to a client the moment in time that their bandwidth was going to run out, or the ROI of upgrading to a fully managed cloud DR solution. However, it's critical that relevant information is presented in a way that sales managers can understand.

What you should do: Start by targeting your most loyal and top-tier customers. Then use the information you have about customers to model how upselling a service will benefit their organisation. By targeting the right customers at the right time you can increase the level of service you provide across your entire estate. Even outside of the context of selling a differentiated experience, upselling can help you grow margin across the board.

“Upselling requires less investment than customer acquisition”

2. Cross-selling: Leveraging your entire portfolio

Just like upselling, the ability to “land-and-expand” within a business is a critical part of marginal growth. Again, acquisition costs are less, and by targeting the right customers at the right time, your sales teams can effectively demonstrate the value of a new service or solution.

You already sell a host of managed services. The scenario where you have the greatest marginal return is one where you sell the largest number of these services (specifically

the margin rich ones) to as many of your customers as possible. Insights will help you do just that.

What you should do: Your ability to use insights to drive cross-selling relies on the same techniques that will enable upselling. You need to provide sales teams with relevant insights about how your services will benefit customers. Then use that information to target your most loyal customers and expand your service offerings in a way that benefits both you and your customers.

3. Consulting: New streams of revenue

Consulting should be a part of your sales strategy. But it can also be a product itself. A healthy consulting business is capable of 50% margin. By creating the insights framework required to differentiate your network service, you create the ability to harness the insights necessary to move into this margin-rich field and drive up your total profits without generating much cost.

What you should do: A great place to start is to sell consulting services as an “upsell option”. This also creates an opportunity to practice consultative selling techniques within upsell and cross-sell strategies. However, you

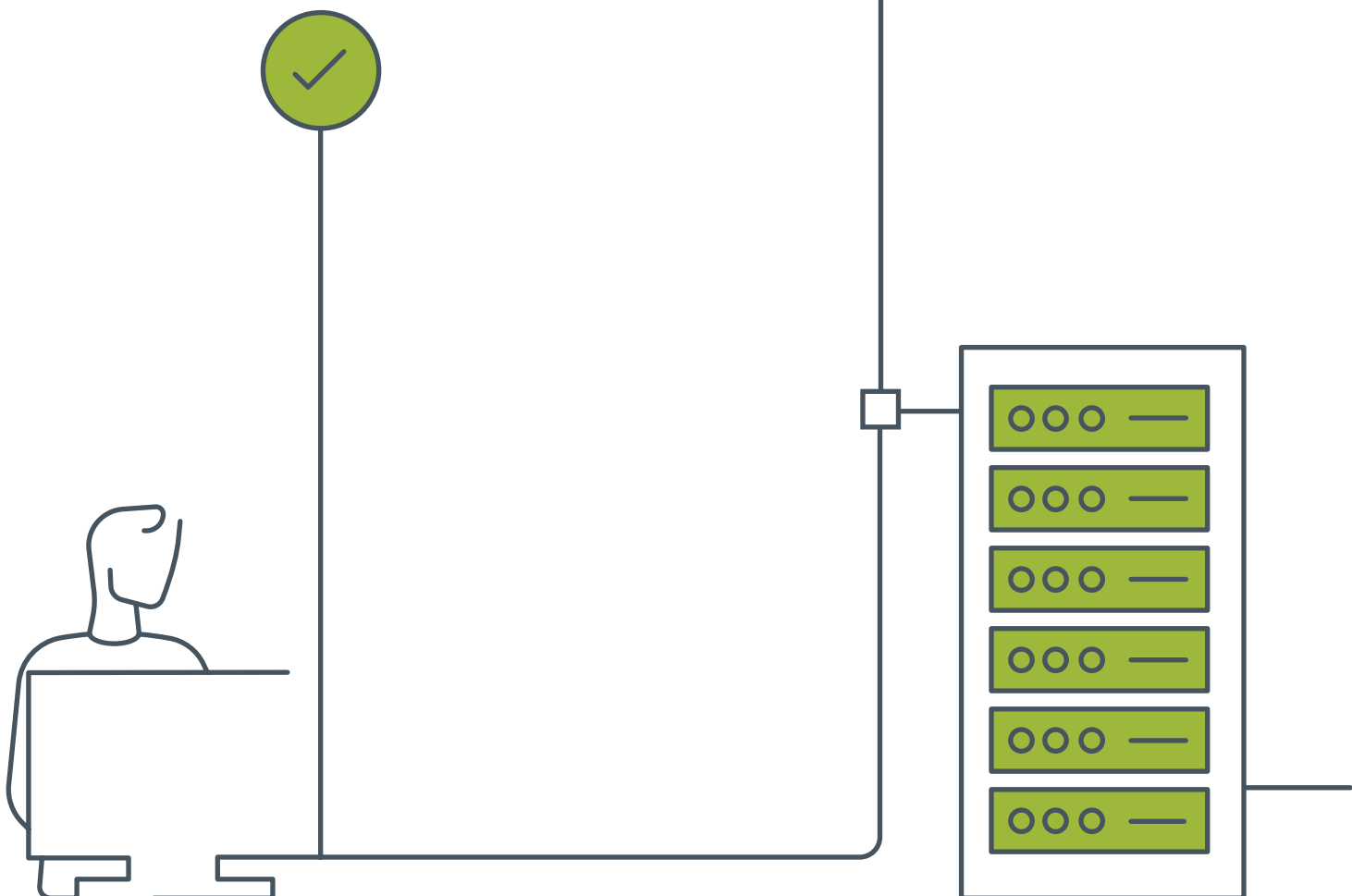
can then branch out to selling consultative services on their own, deploying the same technology and processes that you use to aid standard customers to deliver insights without the other managed services.

“A healthy consulting business is capable of 50% margin”



Making the right connections at the right time

Ultimately, insights enable new sales and increase revenue by focusing your sales teams on the right customers at the right time, and providing the context needed to drive the point home. Critical to all of this is making sure that actionable information is made available to the right people within your organisation in a format that they can actually understand. As we have said again and again, how information is presented is just as important as the information itself. So are the processes you build around using those insights to drive real outcomes.



Building a process to harness the value of information

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Building a process to harness the value of information

Information is power. But it will only impact outcomes if you can build an effective process around the collection, analysis and deployment of that data. Fundamentally, this requires understanding how data should be used. Think about the outcomes described to this point. But there are some other critical steps that you should take into account when creating that process.

Standardisation and productisation are very important. If you have a deeply complex and broad portfolio, it's critical to standardise where you can. Within that process, think about using data to provide evidence that the

services are actually being delivered. Creating a set of best practices around the collection, analysis and application of information will help bring consistency to the outcomes you want to deliver.

Pro tip: Don't shy away from being transparent with data on what's being delivered to customers out of a fear that it will create more support calls. If the service being delivered is substandard, customers will find out at some point. Being proactive keeps you on the front foot, makes a better impression, and helps resolve problems.

Step 1: Collecting data

More than 50% of data that companies collect usually goes unused. How you collect information is vital for future accessibility and use. Consider:

- The events you want to track
- Where they'll be tracked
- Reasons for tracking them

Be sure to identify the tools you'll be using to collect, store and interpret the data. These tools play a crucial role in breaking down data silos and making your data useful.

“50% of data that companies collect usually goes unused”





Step 2: Turning data into insights

Making sense of data is where information is transformed into value. What makes “big data” powerful is not the sheer volume of data. It’s all about how you’re exploiting that information to draw meaningful and valuable insights that guide, inform, and inspire decision-making.

You should think about data on three different levels:

- **Data:** The collected information. Data is every little thing that goes into the equation, but it doesn’t tell you much on its own, it’s just the component parts of your answer.
- **Analytics:** The process of understanding information. Analytics orders data into meaningful groups, letting you start to make sense of the situation and draw conclusions based on the information you have.

- **Insights:** The process of contextualising analysis so that it can be put to use. Insights place data within a real word environment, letting you use analytics to make real and meaningful choices in actual situations.

If you want to effectively harness data, you need tools that are able to shortcut you to insights that matter. If not, you will spend all of your time crunching numbers and never taking the actions you need to build relationships, differentiate your service and expand what you deliver.

“If you want to effectively harness data, you need tools that are able to shortcut you to insights that matter”

Step 3: Leveraging data to create outcomes

Armed with the right insights, you then need to build a process around taking actions. Simply having access to the right information is half the struggle. But technology only opens the door. You also need to make sure you have the right people in place and a framework that allows them to act.



1. The right information

You need to make sure that your system is actually capturing the right data and contextualising it in meaningful ways. Otherwise, it doesn't matter who sees it at all.

Real-time awareness

You need monitoring features that provide real-time data and alerts to keep you informed about everything about the client's network and infrastructure. This helps you to spot trends and prevent issues before they occur.

Integrated workflows

It's normal to use different tools and apps to complete everyday tasks. However, failure to integrate these tools results in an inefficient process, and this trickles down to your customers. Integration is vital to ensure smooth operations and avoid duplication.

Insights over data

You need access to algorithms and technology that's actually able to turn your data into insights and drive effective decision-making within your organisation.

2. The right people

Relevant information needs to be seen by the right people for it to matter. Those people then need a customer-focused approach and a solutions-orientated mindset in order to do anything with those insights. A challenge that MSPs often have is finding technical people who are also customer-focused. One thing to consider is the ability of technology to flatten the learning curve.

The right insights platform will let customer service and sales staff access the information they need to have quality customer conversations, but without those staff needing in-depth technical skills. You should look to use technology to help your teams meet technical requirements while still focusing on customer service.



3. The right culture

Your teams need to be empowered to act on the information they have, and incentivised to go above and beyond to deliver the commercial outcomes you are looking for. This means incentivising proactivity, problem solving and creativity.

You need clear communication of your internal commercial priorities and you must trust your experienced professionals to make good decisions using the insights you've provided, and not be afraid to have conversations with the customer.



People, processes and technology

You need to create a system that can partner people with the right tools within a repeatable and scalable process. Anything less will leave you struggling to effectively drive the kind of commercial change you need. On their own, any single element of this equation can do very little. Together, it's the answer to a better future for the MSP.

"Service and sales staff access the information they need to have quality customer conversations"

How to pick the right tools

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How to pick the right tools

Creating experiences allows you to differentiate your network services. People and processes are critical to delivering that outcome — if you've skipped to this section, go back and read "Building a process to harness the value of information". However, technology is also important, and picking the right tools is critical to even being able to build effective processes.

Full disclosure: We built Highlight (our own tool) to deliver all of the outcomes we have described to this point. It's a cloud-based

insights platform designed to harness the power of data to create differentiating experiences, help MSPs fight commoditisation and drive commercial success.

It would be impractical to guide you through every monitoring, analysis and insights tool on the market. But we can explain how Highlight operates in order to demonstrate the key features you should look for in a solution able to help you connect the right people with the right information at the right time.

Components of effective technology

Our vision was to create software able to transform the inputs of traditional monitoring tools into insights that are actually commercially relevant and understandable by customers, along with sales and operations teams. This is the core outcome you need to achieve. We deliver this with:



1. Tailored heat tiles

You're able to view the status of network and application services at all locations in real-time using customisable heat tiles. These tiles use different colours to show you the status of each service, including green, amber, and red. The real-time service data is classified using three metrics: Stability, Load and Health.

When you have a service degradation, the colour changes from green to amber, while red indicates a service outage. You can also view and monitor all the locations within your network. For a technical deep dive, you can use

strip charts to get a seven-day overview of network activities at a particular location.

What this lets you do: Heat tiles provide a simple and flexible way to create custom views that surface relevant insights. You can easily get a high-level analysis, and then jump into the details where necessary. Sales teams, operations managers and customer service managers can all focus on the information they need to make the right choices. The whole interface is designed to seamlessly guide you from analysis to action, and drive commercial success.

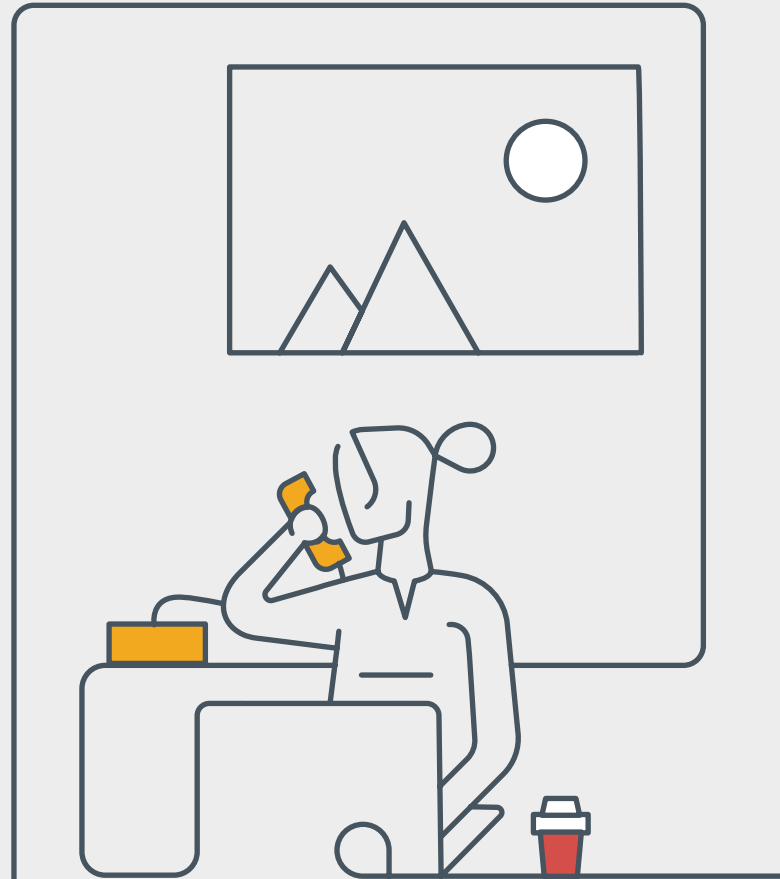


2. Single-pane-of-glass

You don't have to struggle to locate your applications, services or network. Highlight lets you view everything in a single graphical interface. This allows you to respond quickly to different issues and take the necessary actions to ensure optimal network performance.

Highlight integrates data from different environments and applications into a single display to provide managers with visibility into the key metrics and indicators. This allows for effective management of different resources, including physical, wired, wireless, and virtual sources.

What this lets you do: Whether you have 500 devices or 50,000 devices, using single-pane infrastructure provides better visibility into all the devices and users. As a result, you have all the information you need to modify security policies, application usage, and access control.



Highlight is a tool for you, your customers, and everyone in your value chain



3. Customer access and multi-tenancy

Highlight is a tool for you, your customers, and everyone in your value chain. You can provide customers, resellers and specific segments of your organisation with unique login credentials which they can use to obtain relevant information. Critically, they will only be able to see the information they need to see, and you can effortlessly navigate between estates.

Fundamentally, this capability is about aligning our tool with the MSP commercial structure. Our platform is able to securely manage hundreds or thousands of customer accounts and make partnering with resellers easy.

What this lets you do: Customer access lets you provide the kinds of cost control/projection, data visualisation, status updates and SLA reviews necessary to truly integrate yourself within your customers' workflow. Again, this is critical to creating a differentiated experience and becoming a trusted and virtual part of your customer's IT team.

Your ability to engage with resellers within the same framework simply expands your capability to offer a more complete service package and effectively scale to meet customer demands.



4. Commercially contextualised network information

Everything about Highlight is focused on surfacing the right information to people who can actually use those insights to act. Critical to this is contextualising data with the information needed to drive commercial success. This means not only looking at traffic and bandwidth, but understanding which applications are being used, by whom and for what purpose.

You can view information such as users, devices, applications, and location — creating contextual awareness — and use that information to inform sales processes,

upselling and consultative opportunities. As such, you're able to understand the events within the network and conditions under which they occur.

What this lets you do: Contextualised network information provides an accurate and true picture of your customer's environment. This proactive approach makes it easy for your team to optimise, maintain, and secure their infrastructure. Critically, it makes it possible to advise customers on best practices, evidence when expansions are needed and why, and more effectively participate as part of your customer's IT team.

Finding the right solution

The main thing to consider when selecting an insights platform is how information is presented. It's critical that the right people are able to focus on the right insights, and that they can access that information in a format they understand. That means providing the right views for sales teams, operations teams and service teams, along with customers and other reseller partners.

Highlight can deliver these outcomes — it's what we built the platform to do. But if there is one thing you should take away from this it's the importance of looking beyond traditional monitoring tools. You need creative ways to intuitively surface insights and use non-technical visualisations to more effectively communicate information.



Sell an experience, not a commodity

Let's summarise and pull this all together.

Businesses across the economy are rethinking the future. For all of the hardship caused this year, it's also presented an opportunity. Disruption makes it possible to start anew and change entrenched mistakes. Now is the time to take action.

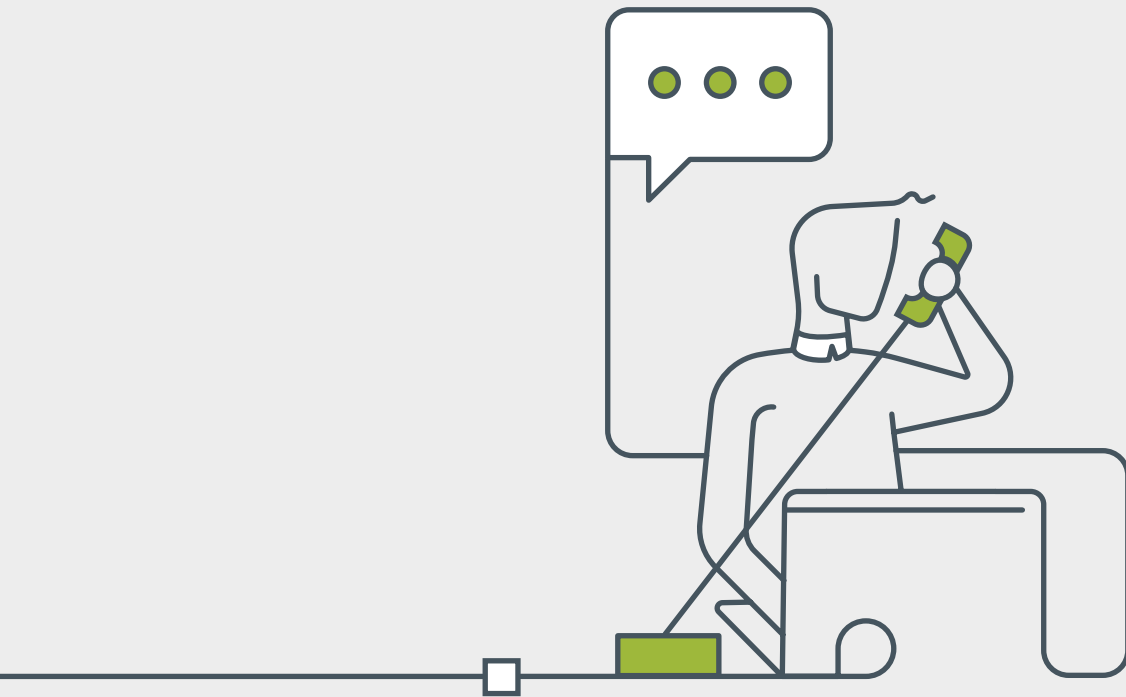
For service providers, accepting commoditisation and finding strategies to differentiate themselves within a commoditised market are central to a better future. This is how you can grow margin with connectivity and develop ways of working that are beneficial to both you and your customers.

1. Differentiated commodities are actually selling something more than (and in addition to) that commodity.
2. By creating an experience of being your customer and leading on service, you can create an outcome that is more than the sum of its parts.
3. Partnering the right insights with the right people enables you to create that differentiated experience and grow margin in a commoditised market.



Everything runs on the network, but the network tends to be invisible. By providing tools which become an integral part of how you and your customers engage, you become a more visible part of their business. The real goal should be to act like a seamless part of your customers' IT function — creating an integrated value chain that cannot be pulled apart and price compared on a component-by-component level.

Effectively leveraging data and using insights to enable communication is central to creating the seamless and valuable experiences needed to drive differentiated outcomes. We built Highlight specifically to help MSPs achieve this goal. If you want to discuss the importance of insights to your business, get in touch — we'd be happy to help.



Transform your network
and create more profitable
customer relationships.

Talk to an Expert