



## EXPERT OPINION:

# Migration mountains: Business-focused data migration – the key to next generation telecoms?

Data migration is all about moving data from one environment to another in an optimal way, with the least amount of business disruption and risk; whether to consolidate applications or to change from one vendor, or version of an application to another, data migration is at the heart of the deployment process. In the telecoms market, OSS/BSS environments are being optimised to fit in with next generation strategies for driving down operating costs, improving efficiency and increasing customer focus.



The author is Charles Andrews, CEO of Celona.

Mergers and acquisitions also have been prevalent in recent years, while the convergence of service networks and regulatory pressures have greatly increased the focus on business application deployment or upgrade, and consequently application data migration. This has been particularly true for the areas of network inventory management, billing, CRM and Web services.

However, many such application decisions get deferred because of concerns over the data migration aspects of such projects. In other words, especially for mission critical and 24x7 applications, the potential risks of time and cost overruns in data migration mean that many enterprises prefer to delay their application plans, ultimately to the detriment of the business. Undoubtedly, data migration projects have typically been prone to time and cost overruns and, in some cases, outright failures. However, this does not need to be the case any more.

### VanillaPlus Jargon Buster:

**ETL** = Extract, Transform, Load (data)

**eTOM** = Enhanced Telecom Operations Map

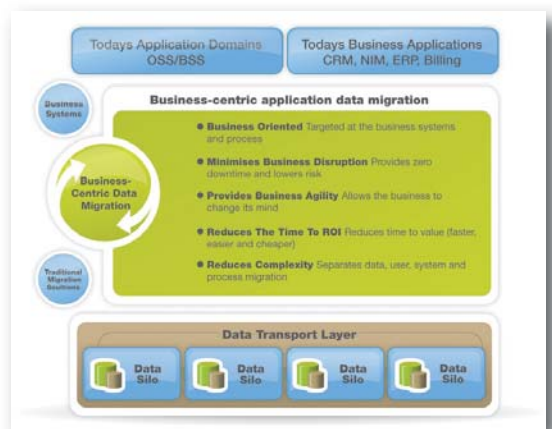
**RoI** = Return on Investment

**SID** = Shared Information and Data (model) System

### Data migration that supports business requirements

One of the major problems associated with data management in general is the tendency to treat data in isolation rather than as a part of a broader environment, in other words to treat data separately from applications. By doing this, the data is essentially separated from the business and can lose its integrity, which is especially true when it comes to data migration. In part this is because historical solutions (conventional ETL tools and scripts) were designed for a different purpose (moving data into a data warehouse), but in any case such tools have no understanding of the context within which data is used and therefore cannot ensure that the context is retained.

From the outset, it is key to de-risk the data migration process, to understand the context within which data is being used in the business, and to preserve that context throughout the migration process.



Telecoms IT transformation or rather optimisation of OSS/BSS stacks is a highly desired outcome. Current architectures in many cases are overly complex, not fully automated and lack flexibility. Meanwhile, the solutions landscape is littered with systems that are too expensive, not scalable, unable to cope with the demands being placed upon them, or are simply redundant or duplicated and need to be removed — none of this is news to the industry. We know that as pure organic growth goes out of maturing markets we need to control operational costs, focus on customer satisfaction and innovate to replace flattening revenues from commoditised services such as voice.

The problem, as always, has been in delivering against that vision. At a high level the industry blueprints such as eTOM and SID ►



look both appealing and feasible. But on the ground we also know how much hard work is required to deliver against the vision. Of course, some CSPs (communication service providers) have done so – and the whole market salutes their determination, vision and industry – but for the rest the problem remains of how to move from where they are to where they want to be.

Buying a new back-end infrastructure is not like buying a new car. In the automotive business you go to a showroom, have a test drive, agree a price and then select the extras you would like to have. A few weeks later your car, personalised to your requirements, is delivered for an agreed on-the-road price – the process is fairly predictable and customer-centric. Auto dealers certainly do not have to incorporate integral, vital parts of your old car into the new one.

The truth is that transformation or optimisation begins after system selection. It is at that point that business process transformation, implementation, integration and data migration / transformation begins.

### Realising the full value of a new system

In fact, the full value from a new billing, CRM or inventory management solution cannot be realised until a whole load of complex legacy, yet business critical, data has been moved to the new solution. Operational efficiency objectives from switching off legacy solutions cannot be realised until all the necessary data has been moved to the new target system. And by even attempting to move this data, business exposure to risk is high.

So a desired outcome is to optimise, but many fear the transformation. It is important to understand that this is not a one-off process: back end transformation cannot be achieved in one hit for the average CSP. And neither does throwing money at the problem negate risk or guarantee data being delivered on time.

Time is the real enemy here: the longer it takes for a business to migrate its data, the more problematic the migration will become. Reduced migration cycle times are therefore key, as is predictability. Without predictability you cannot plan, and for large telecoms operators migrating systems is something of a way of life. Not being able to deliver migrations predictably and reliably means they cannot control their Rol or cannot

perform accurate business planning – impacting both shareholder and customer confidence.

What makes the process more problematic is that there is no time to migrate any more – business applications operate 24x7. Applications cannot simply be switched off at the weekend and the data then moved. Even if they could switch everything off for the weekend, they could not move it all in that time, given the sheer volume of data involved.

### Business-centric data migration opens the door

Business orientated application data migration enables quick, reliable, predictable data migration in a controlled fashion, all within a zero downtime environment. Now businesses can achieve that fast-track transformation or optimisation that will deliver competitive advantage, shareholder and customer confidence, and lower operational costs. Modern purpose-built data migration platforms address many of the problems that CSPs have struggled with when using older data migration technologies and scripts.

Modern platforms enable a CSP to have much greater control and increased visibility of the migration process, which improves efficiency and lowers risk. They support bi-directional synchronisation of data held in legacy and new applications, and provide a zero downtime environment, a feature we pioneered at Celona. Furthermore, they enable CSPs to manage the movement of users, data, applications and processes independently, ensuring that the complexities of process-dependent data are fully managed.

From a CSP's perspective the most important benefit is that these modern approaches and purpose-built tools enable both fast-track transformation and a faster time-to-value from that transformation. Data can be migrated incrementally in business-driven data sets, and CSPs can therefore gain value from their investment much faster.

Now is not the time for CSPs to delay their transformation or optimisation programmes, but it is time that they raised their expectations about how these transformations can be delivered with certainty and plan accordingly for a successful outcome which fully embraces and enables the business goals.

[www.celona.com](http://www.celona.com) 

“Data migration projects have typically been prone to time and cost overruns and, in some cases, outright failures. This does not need to be the case any more.”