
Atlantic Tele-Network: Revenue assurance no longer an afterthought

Its ability to not only stop leakages but also identify new marketing opportunities makes it more important than ever

May 20, 2011
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Atlantic Tele-Network offers wireless and wireline connectivity and services to underserved U.S. and Caribbean markets. The organization had grown its revenues by scooping up the remaining divested Alltel assets from the Verizon acquisition a couple years ago.

With the acquisition, the company generated more revenue, but also more complexity in its business and operations models. As a result, ATN has worked for the past year to implement more centralized and sophisticated revenue assurance capabilities—an effort for which it has already realized ROI, according to Ned DeMent, director of operations for ATN. He spoke to Connected Planet about “balancing” networks with revenue assurance practices and solutions developed in partnership with cVidya.

Connected Planet: Why is revenue assurance so important to operators—particularly small- to mid-sized companies with limited resources?

DeMent: We have to make sure the amount of traffic over our networks is accurately getting invoiced and that incoming cost assurance (e.g., incoming invoices) is accurate against network usage. That was a challenge before, as we operated in multiple markets—each of which was managed independently, meaning each unto itself was small enough that we could do it all manually initially. With the acquisition of the Alltel assets, we knew we had to centralize more and automate manual processes inside the subsidiary units; beginning by putting them onto a common revenue assurance system from cVidya last June. So we have been, and continue to, look at all switch-to-bill processes. We expect it will take another year to fine tune them all as we put them on the new system and customize it to ensure we are accurately measuring our data flows. We really have to evaluate the efficiency and accuracy of the entire network in a consistent manner now as we grow.

Connected Planet: Is it difficult to get executive buy-in for revenue assurance projects, or is that changing?

DeMent: There’s a big change underway, as revenue assurance used to be an afterthought; now, people at all levels realize how important it is to monitor and balance systems. When you start finding where your human mistakes are happening between the network and billing systems, and you stop the data leakages, it’s easier to justify, but even without it, today’s environment is such that most executives recognize “revenue assurance” is not only an exercise in finding leakages, but in finding opportunities for marketing to create new products.

The big thing is going after the opportunities you'd otherwise miss, so we are combining our revenue assurance with business analytics—also from cVidya—to go after new demographics or geographies where competitors might be light, or identify sub segments that we otherwise might not have considered.

But it also is good to get the immediate ROI, as we did in discovering we were, for example, paying RIM too much for activations. Whether provisioning, or voice and data, we will evaluate everything from the network to the features on the handsets to become as efficient as possible.

Connected Planet: If you could have any wish come true in terms of revenue assurance solutions, what would it be?

DeMent: I would love if solutions could be easier to use, but the the networks are so complex—so individual and customized—that the solutions also have to be customized. You have to customize the revenue assurance solution to fit the network, so it can never be easy. We think the vendors are doing a good job of making it as simple as it can be, despite the inherent complexity.

(Link to the original article: http://connectedplanetonline.com/bss_oss/news/Atlantic-Tele-Network-Revenue-assurance-no-longer-an-afterthought-0520/)