



Orange Business Services Scales Enterprises with Netformx

When a carrier provisions VoIP on a massive scale, the devil lies very much in the contractual details. Such is the case with Orange Business Services (www.orange-business.com), the converged network subsidiary of France Telecom.

Orange has provided over 200,000 IP telephones to large enterprises and multinationals. Each account requires a separate network design, with each component linked to a billing and tracking Excel spreadsheet for the customer's benefit.

When offering its customers VoIP, Orange faced a customer service challenge in the presale, namely an overcomplicated manual method of identifying inventory and generating quotes. Orange lacked a fully automated tool to streamline the discovery process, or the entire cycle of proposing and designing telephony services and handing the designs off to provisioning. Orange relied on a series of Cisco online validation tools to ensure network design accuracy.

Unfortunately, this required manual entry into a spreadsheet, increasing the chance of errors and requiring the sales team to engage in a lot of tedious cutting and pasting. Compounding the problem, Cisco provided six separate tools for different components of the Cisco-based network, each requiring separate data entry into spreadsheets. The process also didn't support non-Cisco gear such as Nortel servers or Adtrans CSU/DSUs. Scalability was another issue.

"There was no automated way of designing smaller networks, while the process became too cumbersome for larger networks," says Carol Guedez, Orange's Global Head of Quality and Efficiency for Professional Services.

A lack of accurate diagnostic tools added to the fog. Not every version of the Cisco IOS supports VoIP, while Cisco Telepresence places heavy demand on the network. Writing maintenance contracts for Orange remained a nightmare because of the need to determine whether or not an enterprise customer's network could sustain consistent VoIP. Often, this could not be readily answered due to a dearth of accurate and up-to-date network documentation.

"We either sent someone on-site or we took the customer's word about their network," says Alan Kinsey, a Principal Consultant for Orange. "But the customers often don't know what they have."

Enter Santa Clara, Calif.-based Netformx (www.netformx.com), a provider of automated network design and quoting platforms.

Netformx looks for executive sponsors within companies to

grow their relationship, and Guedez was that person. Guedez sat on an advisory board for another company that had contemplated using the Netformx solution, so she recommended Netformx to Orange. Orange launched a trial version and assessment in 2003.

"I was looking to bring standardization, quality, and efficiency to our discovery process," says Guedez. "We needed regularly generated reports."

Orange Business Services installed DesignXpert from Netformx to automatically document and validate any network design that goes beyond a standard router configuration. Orange uses Netformx's Enterprise AutoDiscovery (EAD) feature to perform network audits as the first step in setting up maintenance contracts.

"Our tools provide weekly reports or data knowledge of the base components of networks, VoIP, and voice mail as a presale and maintenance tool for sales departments," says Raphael Epstein, President of Netformx.

Epstein estimates his AutoDiscovery tools shortened Orange's quoting process from two weeks to two days, while increasing the telecom provider's network sales 10 to 20 percent.

The Orange sales team could now quickly design and quote VoIP-based services to its enterprise customers. Guedez says the designers began to use Netformx for more than just quick quotes.

"They are using it for large implementations and network design, and as a way to manage moves, adds, and changes to the network," she says. "The tool has flexibility."

Netformx relies on an annual renewal of licenses for its revenues, so it continues to update and support its DesignXpert solution. Epstein estimates that Orange has grown its number of licenses from 10 to 50 since 2005.

Guedez says Netformx supports training sales people in a variety of different ways, including a monthly user forum, instructional webinar, a help desk, and monthly calls. There is also a list of licensed experts in a salesperson's area if they need extra advice.

Guedez uses the Netformx solution monthly to measure the value of the tool to the company.

"I want to make sure we are getting the most money out of it," she says. "Every single user updates the spreadsheet... I have to determine what's protected revenue and what's a new business opportunity," she says. ▀

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