



Why CSPs Need A Clear Omnichannel Strategy to Sell B2B2X Services



More communication service providers (CSPs) are broadening their portfolios to include products and services co-created with their partners and customers. In addition, enterprise buyers have become increasingly used to the frictionless, B2C-style experiences from online marketplaces, such as those run by AWS and Google Cloud. But the complexity underlying the delivery of seamless omnichannel purchasing is growing significantly for CSPs.

CSPs must respond to their customers' expectations for consistent purchasing experiences to maintain their B2B and B2B2X base. Yet, many CSPs struggle with sales due to siloed or poorly integrated selling and order capture systems, multiple product catalogs and legacy BSS stacks, leaving their B2B customers with poor experiences.

So what can CSPs do? The answer lies in centralizing the configure, price, quote (CPQ), catalog and order capture functions. The centralization of these functions enables CSPs to quickly respond to revenue-generating opportunities, shorten their lead-to-cash cycles and deliver intuitive, omnichannel purchasing experiences.

Co-created value propositions require new processes.

CSPs are bringing different value propositions to the market as they transition from product-centric and technology-centric organizations to customer-centric digital service providers. A significant portion of these new products and services will not be native to the CSP; they will develop from cross-industry collaborations with vertical experts in healthcare, entertainment, automotive, computing, logistics, education services and more.

These services will be co-created in an ecosystem where the vertical partners and the CSPs will share responsibilities of providing the optimal sale, fulfillment, billing and assurance processes to deliver the best business outcomes for their mutual end-customers.

But doing this is easier said than done. CSPs have an increasing volume of offers to manage, with some juggling over 50,000 SKUs and products for enterprise customers. And this number will continue to rise as CSPs introduce new services, which from bundling connectivity with partner security and IT solutions to reselling standalone third-party products.

As a result, the associated selling processes will need updating to handle the volume and diversity of the offers. That's why CSPs need a common product management and selling (or lead-to-order) framework that works for all offer types and customer segments across all channels at scale. Put another way, an omnichannel strategy.

Key factors impacting the CSP sales process

1. Increasing complexity in the sell-fulfill-bill cycle, tied to the growth in the diversity of offer types and categories
2. New customer and partner types becoming central to the B2B2X ecosystem
3. New data management frameworks for new customers, since not all will be connectivity-based subscribers
4. Additional sales channels including digital apps, which are becoming a primary engagement channel as customers move away from call centers (complicated by partner offerings with dedicated channels, further increasing the number)

As the number of offers, channels and partners increase, the associated selling processes will also need to be updated. CSPs need a common product management and selling (or Lead-to-Order) framework that works for all offer types and customer segments across all channels to ensure a consistent purchasing experience. A lead-to-order process that can be instantiated from any channel enables CSPs to provide a true omnichannel experience.

Understanding the Lead-to-Order Framework



The architectural framework underpinning the Lead-to-Order Framework depends on three key factors.

1. Customer account and data management

All sales channels should let users create, maintain and view a customer’s data. The data should be made available to all channels on-demand and with the appropriate depth of information.

The ecosystem platform that drives the omnichannel selling experience should have a central customer management system which manages the customer account hierarchy and the associated data. This is preferable to storing customer data in channels triggering the sales process, which results in data duplication and renders the data unmanageable.

The hierarchy and the data structure should also be extensible to handle offer complexity. The customer data management can provide a true omnichannel experience by centralizing the interactions based on key events during the selling processes.

Apart from the data management, the customer management function should have the ability to integrate to back-end OSS/BSS systems based on the context of the selling process (e.g., fetch contextual data based on customer interactions that originate in these channels). Context is then decided by the stage/step within the sales process.

Benefits of customer account and data management:

- a. Customer data duplication across the ecosystem is prevented.
- b. The Centralized function acts as the source of truth, with real-time APIs to the back-end OSS/ BSS to fetch data in real time based on the process context.

2. Sales offer management

As a customer moves between channels during the sales process, it makes sense to centralize offers and promotions in a centralized catalog. Channel-specific promotions can be created in the same catalog, but sales offers should not be distributed across the sales channels. CSPs can account for the increasing diversity of offers using a standards-based model for offer management across sales, billing and fulfillment systems.

Benefits:

- a. A common model with references across the enterprise increases efficiency in customer acquisition and service management processes.
- b. A true omnichannel experience is delivered across multiple channels during the above processes.

3. Unified and centralized order capture

Some offers and promotions require agile and simple ordering processes, and others are complex orders involving partner products and services that can take days or weeks to fulfill. The channels used to manage these processes can vary and are sometimes tied to external partner processes.

Ecosystems cannot function effectively if they depend on different order capture systems developed for different categories of offers, channels and customer types. In an omnichannel architecture, a common process framework is provided by the unified and centralized order capture platform. The platform can be configured to handle all simple and complex offers for all customer types and can expose capabilities to the different channels as required. This centralized function manages the lifecycle of the entities like product quotes and the shopping cart.

Benefits:

- a. A centralized quote, shopping cart management and order capture process removes the need to replicate these functions across multiple channels thereby enabling the customer to move between channels easily.
- b. If data and functionality are exposed to all channels, new channels can be introduced (or old channels replaced). The core selling function(s) remain and processes do not have to be built for each channel.





Transform, engage, monetize

For an ecosystem to provide a true omnichannel experience during the sales process, the architectural framework should have the following functionality:

1. **Selling process:** Pricing and configuration should be driven by a centralized definition of the offers, and this offer management function should incorporate product selling rules.
2. **Sales order creation:** Shopping cart management, customer profile set-up and non-commercial order configuration can be handled as a single process. This process manages the customer lifecycle during the selling stage, maps the offer structure to the customer account hierarchy, and exposes the business functionality of shopping cart management and the quote-to-order process to the channels.
3. **Flexibility:** The process allows for the skipping of certain steps in the sales process, based on offer complexity or customer type.

If these important features are taken into consideration while formulating the solution, the platform will enable the digital service provider to provide a smooth and seamless omnichannel experience to their end customers during the sales process.

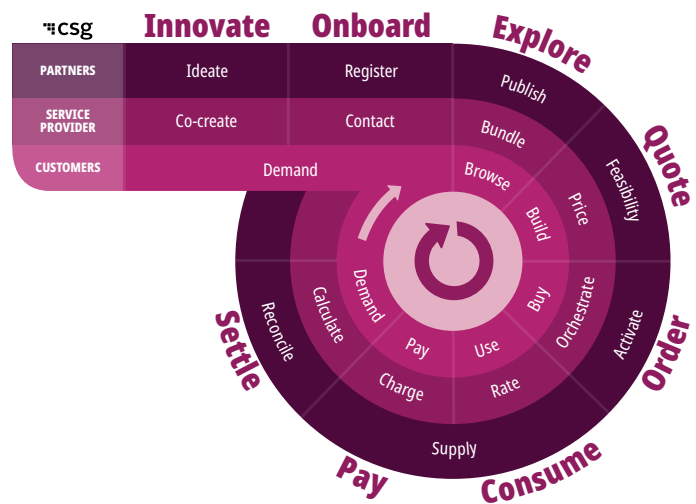
CSPs need a strong omnichannel strategy for their B2B market to deliver self-service agility, cross-selling, B2B personalization and a shorter lead-to-cash cycle. By using a clearly defined lead-to-order framework that is underpinned by a catalog-driven BSS architecture, CSPs can ensure that they build sustainable growth with improve customer experiences.

As CSPs continue their transformation to digital business models for B2B and B2B2X, they recognize that complexity is unavoidable as they build rich, sophisticated multi-party business models. Those providers who strategically manage that complexity will be the ones who thrive in the new digital economy.

With a cross-industry ecosystem of partners, and a vast range of on-network and off-network offerings, CSPs can manage complexity by leveraging automation, intelligence and orchestration to make growth scalable. And CSG Encompass can enable just that.



CSG Encompass is a cloud-based SaaS solution that is catalog-orchestrated and incorporates TM Forum Open APIs to provide the north-south and east-west interfaces needed for multi-faceted business models. This approach provides CSPs with the ability to manage the complex multi-sided network and service workflows created by combining of partner functionality with software-defined network (SDN) connectivity options. Get to market in hours, not weeks or months, with catalog-driven orchestration coupled with automation across the entire lead-to-cash lifecycle.



About CSG

CSG empowers companies to build unforgettable experiences, making it easier for people and businesses to connect with, use and pay for the services they value most. Our customer experience, billing and payments solutions help companies of any size make money and make a difference. With our SaaS solutions, company leaders can take control of their future, and tap into guidance along the way from our more than 5k-strong experienced global team.

Want to learn more about how to be a change maker and industry shaper like our 1,000-plus clients? Visit csgi.com to learn more.