



SEPARATE REALITY

BIG DATA, BIG BILLS, BIG CUSTOMERS, BIG CLIENT... BIG SOLUTIONS

How we applied big thinking - and a big solution - to one of the USA's biggest suppliers of internet services.



As the second largest US state, there's nothing small about Texas. And with a network reaching over 17 million homes and a \$97.4 billion revenue (2008), there's nothing small about Verizon, either.

There was no way we could pass up the chance to mosey on down to Fort Worth and team up with Comverse – who had just acquired the Netonomy solution stack – to help Verizon Business develop an even better customer experience.

The questions that needed answering

The supplier's supplier of internet services is located in a small (ahem) 2 acre sized warehouse on the outskirts of Dallas, Texas and supplies the major ISPs in the USA like America On Line (AOL) as well as smaller providers like The Indiana Data Centre or Wisconsin Communications Inc, and also supplies other subsidiaries like Verizon Online.

Customer demands and a need to streamline internal operations resulted in some big questions. Like why couldn't customers receive an electronic bill, that allowed them to drill into it interactively so they could understand it properly? Was there a way of disputing bills online rather than phoning up the call centre? Could customers not pay for the bill online as well?

It was up to us to provide a solution that could answer those questions – and we also discovered a few things ourselves in the process. For example, we now know it's possible to pay multi-million dollar bills with just a credit card. And we also learned that huge bills like these can often incur disputes over just a few cents!

It was time for some big thinking and some elegant solutions.

We explored, we developed, we repeated...

The first month of the project was tough, and the numbers turned out to be huge. During the day we explored the problem space and exchanged ideas with the folks from Verizon Business. At night, we ran tests, re-configured the application, wrote use cases and prototyped the solution, readying for the next day.

Once we were confident that we fully understood the problem and the requirements, we flew home and began to write everything up. A few weeks later, armed with 100 Detailed Use Cases, a High Level Design, an interface catalogue and a working Target Operating Model we were ready to head back to Texas with all guns blazing and demonstrate to Verizon that we had the skills and expertise to deliver. We would start with a proof-of-concept to give the project sponsor the extra ammo he needed to get it through the organization.

However, three weeks after starting the proof-of-concept something remarkable happened. Verizon cancelled it and moved the project into a full delivery. Until then, that kind of thing was unheard of.

The solution we delivered was so accurate that it identified previously unknown faults in Verizon's reconciliation solution, which drastically reduced the number of disputes raised by customers.

We also trained a brand new team during the project, which meant Verizon Business could continue to own and maintain our solution in the future, and take advantage of low ownership costs.

It was unexpected bonuses like these that really helped us wow our client.

So, were the results just as big?

You bet. While it was a fairly straightforward solution despite the huge numbers, it delivered enormous benefits to Verizon Business, and ensured that their billing system was much more accessible to its customers.

The new desktop portal now allows ISP customers to view current and previous bills online, drill down into specific bills so that line items can be explored down to the cent level, make payments, and view all past, present and future payments. What's more, customers can also dispute line items, track the status of current disputes, print off invoices and download data for import into in-house systems.

Internally, the call centre desktop portal now means that Verizon staff can view, manage and resolve disputes, automatically approve certain disputes, analyse and report on dispute data, and send essential notifications and alerts to customers about upcoming bills, late payments, credits and more.

Customers feel looked after and staff have the tools to look after them.

Put in plain Texas speak: y'all did a good job.