Digital Transformation World is back to full strength and showcased new vendors in the market

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TM Forum's Digital Transformation World (DTW) 2022 was held in Copenhagen on 20–22 September 2022. Beyond the excitement of the return of in-person meetings, the event acted as a good barometer to assess the changes to the telecoms industry over the past 2 years or so. One such change was the arrival of Google Cloud as a TM Forum member and exhibitor alongside AWS and Microsoft Azure, thereby reflecting the importance of the telecoms market for all of them.

Several new technology vendors attended DTW this year

The launch of Jio Platforms was one of the less predictable events at DTW 2022. Jio Platforms provides in-house-built solutions for 5G core, 5G radio, IMS, VoNR, AI/ML, OSS and BSS.

Rakuten previously launched its Symphony solutions and the associated Symworld in February 2022, and it too was highly active at this year's DTW. Indeed, Rakuten's CEO, Tareq Amin, delivered Wednesday's keynote session about "making it happen".

Elisa's Polystar division was also exhibiting at the show with its automated NOC solutions.

Time will tell how each of these operator technology initiatives will fare against solutions from more-established vendors, but the ability of these new players to test their products on their own networks and services is difficult to fault.

APIs are gaining traction after a long and faltering journey

Visitors to DTW were able to view the 40 or so catalysts (including one that used the intent-based networking solution from TELUS and Nokia) that are currently working with the new TM Forum 921 API. Intent-based networking is still in its infancy, but interest is extremely high due to the pressure to further automate network operations. This approach enables a looser coupling of various service layers and, rather than being prescriptive about what each layer configuration should be, it encapsulates what each layer needs to deliver. This gives each layer much greater autonomy and simplifies the processes and orchestration configurations needed.

TM Forum's APIs have been in existence for many years, but it has only been in recent years (possible due to support from newer solutions) that they have appeared to gain traction. Jio Platforms in particular has used more TM Forum APIs than any other software vendor (52 to date).

5G is still the most significant catalyst for change, but questions remain over how enterprise services will work

5G remained a significant topic for vendors and operators alike, but the focus at DTW was on the B2B and B2B2X solutions that include network slicing capabilities. These capabilities must be achieved in order to gain returns on the financial investments made into 5G. The results of a survey instigated by Infovista and showcased at DTW show that 87% of operators believe that they could have rolled out 5G more efficiently, and 86% said that benefits had taken too long to be realised.

DTW showcased new products and rebranded established solutions

Dedicated SaaS vendors' revenue is growing significantly faster than that of most OSS/BSS vendors and as such, SaaS is gaining traction as operators seek to support cloud adoption.

Nokia took the opportunity to launch its AVA brand to rationalise its product set; this is an exercise that Amdocs also accomplished earlier this year. Nokia's AVA Charging service, which was launched at DTW, highlights the vendor's continued push on SaaS.

SaaS provider ServiceNOW unveiled its latest release, Tokyo, which provides inventory management capabilities and more-granular process automations.

Juniper and Optiva also announced new SaaS products at DTW 2022, as did Amdocs via its acquisition of Mycom OSI. Vonage (now owned by Ericsson) demonstrated its new approach to "network exposure" and the opening up of partnerships to develop new solutions for the 120 000 customers and 1.1 million developers that use its platform and support a SaaS-based approach.

Energy efficiency has become critical

Energy management and reduction had more poignancy this year than most because laudable ecological goals have been enhanced with financial concerns associated with rising energy costs. For example, Verizon reported using AI in field force management to reduce its energy costs by USD100 million. Nokia announced its acquisition of Eta Devices to improve energy efficiency at based stations.

Moving an event from its much-loved location in Nice was a risk for TM Forum, particularly because previous attempts to move to Dublin had not been successful. Copenhagen proved to be good choice: the Bella Center gave plenty of room for meetings on-site and the surrounding area offered much to do and many high-quality restaurants to enjoy.

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