

Low-code platforms can help CSPs to accelerate the transformation of their digital experience

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Customers' behaviour and expectations are undergoing a seismic change; customers have been significantly influenced by their experiences in engaging with digital-native companies such as Amazon and Netflix. Traditional, assisted channels for customer engagement (such as in-person visits to large stores and phone calls to expansive call centres) have long been considered to be a strength of large communications service providers (CSPs), but these are becoming unfashionable because customers are shifting to digital, unassisted channels en masse. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accentuated this shift thanks to the social distancing and working-from-home norms that the crisis has brought about.

CSPs' approach to customer engagement has evolved substantially over the years. However, improvements to customer engagement and the customer experience have been slow and have not quite kept pace with best practices and customer expectations, despite CSPs' best intentions and urgent initiatives. There are multiple reasons for CSPs' slow adoption of modern customer engagement practices, but an important factor is the state of their legacy incumbent systems, which have become highly complex to manage thanks to their reliance on proprietary technologies and customised interfaces.

Low-code platforms could be a game-changer by virtue of their ability to make software development accessible to non-technical teams

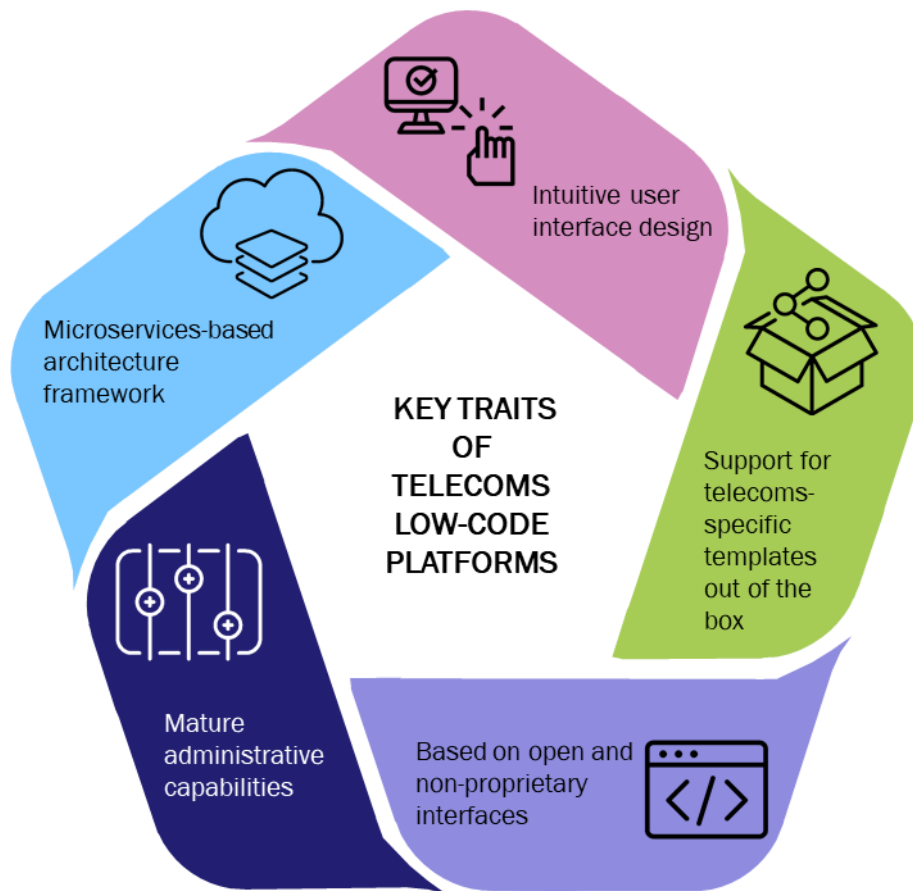
Low-code platforms offer CSPs the ability to redefine and democratise software development and to modernise their digital experiences. Low-code platforms use a software development framework that relies on graphical user interface (GUI)-based modelling to build applications and functions. Low-code platforms abstract the relevant functions and flows into a simplified interface without exposing the complexity of the underlying application or its dependencies. They offer capabilities such as visual modelling tools and standardised templates to help users with limited technical backgrounds to configure and set up new products and services.

Low-code platforms do not require knowledge of traditional coding or software development languages, which makes them accessible to a larger number of people across a variety of teams. This will be especially useful in helping business teams to reduce their reliance on IT, which is often a bottleneck that delays the launch of new products and offers into the market. Furthermore, low-code platforms can help CSPs to embrace a culture of rapid testing and fast, almost painless failures, which will be crucial to effectively compete against web-scalers and digital natives.

The reduction in the cost of operations remains one of the main benefits of low-code platforms. Most of the cost savings are realised through improved efficiency due to faster times to market, a reduction in spending on maintenance and a decrease in the need for IT support personnel.

The essential traits of telecoms-specific low-code platforms are captured in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Key traits of telecoms-specific low-code platforms



Source: Analysys Mason, 2021

As CSPs undertake a comprehensive transformation of their customer experience systems, they will need to embrace a platform-centred environment where business and marketing teams are functionally independent and are not dependent on IT support for assessing or launching new features, products or services. The platform model for transformation uses a low-code framework and an end-to-end portfolio, and enables CSPs to swiftly address the challenges of legacy customer experience solutions and embrace emerging best practices. It aligns business and technology demands in a single domain that includes user interface design, business logic definition and monitoring, and also incorporates operations best practices such as DevOps and CI/CD pipelines. The platform model is predicated on openness and is built on standardised and industry-defined interfaces to enable seamless interconnection with external applications and ecosystems.

CSPs can radically improve their times to market and lower their reliance on IT by adopting the best practices of the platform approach

CSPs that are planning to transform their customer experience and engagement systems should consider the following recommendations.

- CSPs should take a low-code, configuration-based approach to software development that empowers business and marketing functions and reduces the load on IT personnel.

- CSPs should prioritise working with solutions providers that offer an end-to-end portfolio that can be deployed from a single unified platform.
- CSPs should prioritise working with solutions providers that enable a phased approach to the transformation of customer experience functions, but still provide a holistic transformation in the long term.

The platform model of transforming customer engagement, which uses low-code platforms and an end-to-end portfolio to improve CSPs' digital experience, will become increasingly common in the medium term. Giving business and marketing teams greater independence, especially from over-stretched IT teams, will help to decrease the time taken for CSPs to respond to market changes and will incubate an environment of innovation, which in turn will lead to strong engagements with the end customer.¹

¹ For more information, see Analysys Mason's [The platform approach to transforming CSP customer experience](#).