

**Why is a
product catalogue
important in
the marketplace?**



The new-age digital service provider is being increasingly viewed as a software shop/market place by new-age consumers. Consumers like to see and access all services under one roof. As digital disruptions change the mind-set of consumers, expectations soar and this will increasingly happen in the 5G era.

Technology evolution

As the technology transitioned from 1G to 5G, several new features/products/services kept getting added with every evolution, and with increased product complexities.

Evolution of mobile technology

1G	Voice	Human-to-Human
2G	Voice, Text	Human-to-Human
2.5G	Voice, Text & Limited data	Human-to-Human
3G	Voice, Text & Mobile Data	Human-to-Human
4G	Voice, Text, Mobile Broadband (QoS) & e-commerce products	Human-to-Human
5G	Voice, Text, High speed Broadband (assured QoS), & e-commerce products	Human-to-Human Human-to-Machine Machine-to-Machine

Fig. 1. Renumber other figures accordingly.

When 3G was introduced, voice, text and data services were enhanced, which led to a revolution in smartphones. The advent of 4G saw the addition of broadband services and e-commerce products were introduced as auxiliary services.

Quality of service improved exponentially with 4G and there was increased focus on customer experience. Traditional customer interactions witnessed a new order as customers interacted not just with customer service executives but also with mobile APPs/tablet/laptop/smart screens which, very often, became their first touch point. This drove an increase in expectations for a seamless omni-channel experience. Several companies, like Amazon, effectively used technology to penetrate varied markets.

Due to the evolution of technology, companies in other parallel sectors started providing voice and text services over the internet, such as Skype and WhatsApp. These services started taking over substantial revenues from service providers and regulations like net neutrality, too, ate into their pie. It was then that service providers started offering not just voice and data services but also many e-commerce and partner products. Handsets were bundled along with the contracts, social networking and voice-over-internet bundles were introduced. Service providers moved from competition to collaboration.



5G

Apart from voice, text and high-speed broadband services, 5G technology brings up the possibility of serving not just human-to-human, but also human-to-machine and machine-to-machine products. Technological enhancements cause higher throughput, network slicing, speed with reliability-bringing a new dimension to service providers, causing them to relook at their products and services.

5G is opening up new avenues for service providers, to cater to individual customers (B2C), enterprise customers (B2B), wholesale customers, cable service providers and content service providers with new-age products.

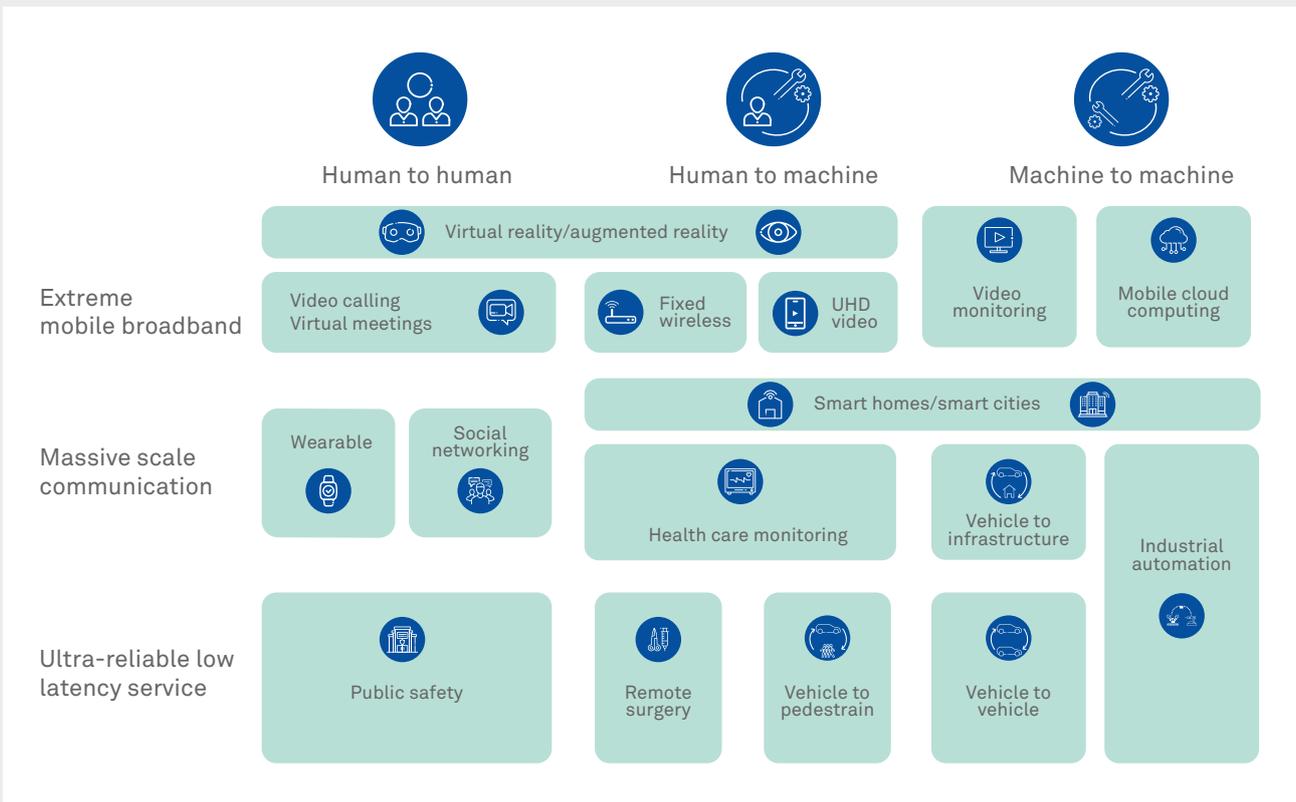


Figure 2: © Copyright 2017 5G Americas- 5G Services and Use Cases

Source : http://www.5gamericas.org/files/9615/1217/2471/5G_Service_and_Use_Cases__FINAL.pdf

A product catalogue is the place where all products consumed by individual consumers and enterprises are configured. The product could be a telco product or partner/e-commerce/new-age product.

Each product:

- Will have a life cycle and it will retire at an appropriate time
- Will be configured with price and appropriate product information
- Will have the fulfilment path to activate

	1G	2G	2.5G	3G	4G	5G
	Voice product	Voice + text product bundle	Voice + text + limited data product bundle	Voice + text + data product bundle	Voice + text + mobile broadband + social + E-commerce + streaming + gaming product bundle	4G services + security + higher throughput + network slicing + speed + IoT + healthcare + smart cities + vehicle + surveillance, long tail product bundle
	Provisioning voice service in NE's	Provisioning voice + text services in NE's	Provisioning voice + text + Limited Data services in NE's	Provisioning voice + text + Data services in NE's	Provisioning Voice + Text + mobile broadband + QoS in NE's Provisioning commerce & partner product services consuming third party API's	Provisioning 4G services in NE's Provisioning Network slicing across the 5G network Provisioning all products consuming third party API's
Quote to customer/enterprise	Simple & manual	Simple & manual	Simple & manual	Medium & manual	Complex & semi-automated	Highly complex (long tail) & fully automated

Figure 3: Evolution of products and offers

Long tail - When a consumer's product search yields a few too many results, it overwhelms him/her, leading to a loss of interest. Hence, products should be displayed based on the persona and with enough information about the product.

Some consumers/enterprises would be interested in building their own products. Service providers should provide a mechanism to mix & match, slice & dice products and create a customized product for that consumer/enterprise. When consumers create their own product, they should be able to get a rate quote. Providing a price quote is easy for individual consumers. However, it is complex in the enterprise world as the rates are negotiable based on the profile and requirements of the enterprise. The complexities increase further in the 5G era due to the long tail of products.

An enterprise consumer could be from the healthcare industry, be an automobile manufacturer or into home security, smart cities, internet security, IoT, etc. The requirements vary from a security service to cloud service to storage to traditional connectivity services.

In new-age offerings, most of the products are largely partner products. Hence, a product catalogue aims to serve as a marketplace for all the products on offer. On purchase of the product, it should be activated seamlessly. Hence, product catalogue-driven order management is the need of the hour.

In the 5G world, a product could be as simple as getting a mobile high speed broadband or as complex as getting a network slice dedicated to a particular service, such as, an emergency/entertainment.

Let's take this example of a car manufacturer who may sell a surveillance service along with his car. Surveillance services ensure the safety of the vehicle, and whenever there is any attempted theft, the intelligent system pro-actively informs the owner, as well as the police.

Summary

Products have taken on different dimension in the digital world. A product may not just be a telco product, it could be an e-commerce product or a digital product like AWS cloud or a network product or a partner product and so on. Hence, today's consumers visualize service providers as one-stop marketplaces.

Due to the extensive nature of their reach spanning different industries, service providers need to be prepared with new-age product management machinery to prevent catastrophic consequences.

About the author

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