Reinvention through M&A: Three Ireland's digital-led approach to achieve the ultimate seamless omnichannel customer experience

Who?

What?

A post-M&A BSS consolidation and customer-experience transformation to deliver a category-leading, omnichannel, digital-first experience across mobile, web, agent-driven channels and physical stores.

How?

Using a "build-once-deploy-many" design-led approach; DevOps methodology; and an API layer built on TM Forum Open APIs, part of the Open Digital Framework

Results

Expected improvements in customer acquisition experience; reduced customer churn;

Consolidation of **300 systems, 16 catalogs** and |more than **50 third-party partners**

30% increase in self-service adoption and automated customer interactions

30% reduction in calls to contact centers

Improvements in digital NPS, customer churn, and time to market for new products and services

360° customer view across multiple channels

Service providers everywhere are under pressure to transform their customer experiences but tackling this in a post-M&A scenario is even more challenging. When Three Ireland acquired O2 Ireland, they recognized that rebranding on its own was not enough so they decided to undergo a major business support system (BSS) consolidation and reinvent their customer experience at the same time. Their vision was to create a personalized and predictive digital-first omnichannel experience for business and retail customers.

A disparate landscape after a major acquisition

By acquiring O2 Ireland, Three Ireland became Ireland's second largest mobile operator with a 38% market share. The two operators were very different, each focusing on distinct market segments with entirely different market offerings. The post-acquisition BSS landscape was sprawling, consisting of more than 300 different systems, 16 catalogs and more than 50 third-party partners spanning both business and consumer markets.

This disparate infrastructure resulted in inconsistent customer engagement across channels, a strong reliance on staff-assisted channels, and a limited ability to compete going forward in a very competitive and digitally-transforming market. Costs had to be reduced, end-of-life systems replaced, and fragmented architecture consolidated to achieve the pace and agility needed to compete and win.

Consolidate, modernize, transform

Three Ireland engaged Amdocs to consolidate and modernize its post-acquisition IT infrastructure, manage operations across its many partners, and to build an entirely new digital, omnichannel customer experience that could serve both consumer and business customers. Of its approach to this large-scale transformation with Amdocs, Stephen Reidy, CIO, Three Ireland says:

"It is not a vendor, not an us-and-them environment – it's everyone sitting at the table and working together to deliver what we need to get done. It is very much a three-way relationship in delivering the end result: a digitally transformed business that gives us a unique differentiator in the marketplace."

Three Ireland's new customer experience had to span app, web, store point of sale (POS), and agent-tablet interfaces, and to be supported with end-to-end automation. Three Ireland's goals included increasing self-service adoption, reducing staff assistance in day-to-day customer interactions, delivering customer-centric personalization across channels, and being future-ready to support fast, continual launches of digital product and services.

The new post-M&A environment needed a highly available system to enable faster time to market, the intelligence to power a predictive and personalized digital experience, and to substantially reduce operational costs.

Three Ireland decided to implement a 360° customer view across multiple channels, with the aim of delivering consolidated and dynamic customer profiles in real time to reflect customers' omnichannel experiences. The solution would drive personalization and proactive action by delivering insights based on first- and third-party data in real time to any supported channel. It would also provide Three Ireland with the ability to identify customer segments for action based on urgency, using machine learning, while identifying risks or growth opportunities predictively through look-alike modelling.

This set of sophisticated capabilities could be provided to any channel from CRM and customer service dashboards to chatbots and campaign management platforms, representing a significant step forward in Three Ireland's ability to become fully customer-centric and engage customers with a personalized experience that anticipates their needs.

The new customer experience interfaces for customers, agents and employees were created using design-led thinking and a "build-once-deploy-many" widget approach. The collective team could design customer experience components, deploy them across multiple channels, and reuse them for later deployment in new channels.

DevOps methodology was used to deliver demos to Three Ireland in order to gather both customer and employee feedback, which was then used to ensure the solution focused on the customer experience through design-led user interface development and close collaboration with stakeholder business units.

A digital experience layer built on APIs

Three Ireland's new solution utilizes a Digital Experience API layer from Amdocs based on TM Forum's Open APIs, with a focus on digital customer commerce and care, and includes line-of-business extensions. Some of the primary REST resource models and APIs utilized include:

- Product Catalog Management API for runtime exposure (that is, the discovery of product offerings) – an Amdocs-led initiative.

- Shopping Cart Management API, also an Amdocs-led initiative.

- Product Ordering Management API

- Product Inventory Management API

- Customer Management API

These TM Forum Open APIs have helped Three Ireland to quickly develop digital portals and other UIs because the digital API layer isolates the interfaces from complex Amdocs CES enterprise java beans (EJB) APIs. These TM Forum APIs provided an advanced starting point for the digital experience layer because they defined a consistent resource model for the business entities required for commerce and care. This experience and success are fed back to the TM Forum API program as a result of Amdocs' involvement.

Path to success

Three Ireland anticipates positive results across a range of key performance indicators that demonstrate the success of a complex transformation and innovative omnichannel-experience implementation:

Customer acquisition is expected to improve as a result of faster time to market for relevant, personalized, new offers and superior online and app-driven acquisition experiences. Self-service adoption is expected to increase by 30%, as are the number of fully-automated customer interactions, while first-call resolution will greatly improve. The volume of calls into contact centers is expected to drop by 30% as well as a result of omnichannel capabilities and more efficient contact centers. The superior online, self-service experiences are expected to improve digital NPS, while the percentage of bundled orders should also increase as a result of automated recommendations.

Three Ireland's innovative customer experience vision

A BSS consolidation and customer-experience transformation delivering a **digital-first experience** across mobile, web, and agent-driven channels and physical stores:

360° customer view

DevOps methodology

"Build-once-deploy-many" design-led approach

An API layer built on **TM Forum Open APIs**, part of the **Open Digital Framework**

Key Benefits:

Consolidation of **300 systems, 16 catalogs** and more than **50 third-party partners**

30% increase in self-service adoption

30% reduction in calls to contact centers

30% increase in fully-automated customer interactions

Improvements in digital net promoter score (NPS), customer churn and time to market for new products and services

TM Forum 2020, (Source: Three Ireland)

Facing challenges at scale

60 vendor partners were involved across IP networks, the service layer, BSS applications and hardware. Both waterfall and Agile methodologies had to be deployed and scheduled. Different systems in different roles across vendors with differing commercial and technical models (as well as size and capabilities) all had to be accounted for, coordinated and tasked according to their roles and experience with this sort of project.

There were two major BSS stacks – each delivering a different customer experience – that had to be consolidated, requiring bridging solutions to minimize customer impacts during the transformation. Amdocs and Three Ireland had to work closely together in order to deliver unified systems that would facilitate Three Ireland's innovative customer-experience vision. This included conducting solution-planning sessions to secure the buy-in from business units, as well as to identify and prioritize the new development efforts required across multiple vendors. The resulting 60+ consolidated customer journeys spanning 10+ channels were then demonstrated twice to the business side in cross-functional sessions. These were first conducted at end-of-development stage and then again during end-to-end testing to ensure that focus stayed on the omnichannel experience and that alignment continued between business stakeholders, vendors, and the overall project.

The shift from waterfall to Agile methodology had to be managed carefully. For example, in order to align teams, set expectations and stick to a common calendar, engagement-testing support had to be planned months in advance (and TM Forum-based integration layers supported this alignment). But it also presented new opportunities for Three Ireland to focus on the customer experience, and for Three Ireland's business side to become more involved: they were able to take advantage of DevOps methodologies to provide Three Ireland's business-readiness team with access to a sandbox that was regularly updated with latest code deliveries. With each code drop, new functionality being introduced to the sandbox was called out to the business readiness team, enabling them to run the flows in the sandbox by themselves and clarify system behavior with solution managers.

> **"Collaboration between the business and IT was key for us – everything from program governance, scoping, process design… business and IT were interlinked,"** explains Reidy.

Regular engagement between business stakeholders and the program enabled efficient, thorough business-acceptance testing (BUAT) since all parties were aligned on system behavior, open defects and required changes well in advance of the BUAT. This, in combination with a close focus on regression test coverage and careful planning and analysis on impacts to customer experience ahead of deployments and bridging periods, have allowed Three Ireland to achieve smooth rollouts, migrations, and rapid adoption of its transformed BSS landscape.