

Collaboration key to telco success

By [Jacob Nthoiwa](#), ITWeb journalist.
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Software vendors, systems integrators, and consultancies should work directly with telcos to improve systems and processes that support service delivery in SA. This is according to operational support systems firm, Mobinomics.

According to Mobinomics MD, Mark Acton, Africa's fixed-line telcos experience various challenges when it comes to delivering services to their customers. "The telcos are not deaf to customer complaints, and there's no lack of trying – but solving the problem is a lot more difficult than it looks from the outside," he adds.

Acton says reliable telecommunications service is an absolutely essential ingredient of economic development. "But it's not just about building networks; it's about taking orders efficiently, providing services fast, and fixing faults promptly."

For example, a small business owner should be able to make an installation appointment with a service technician and be confident the appointment will be kept, he explains. "Then he needs to know that his broadband will keep operating reliably, or be fixed quickly if there are problems."

Ideally, telco service delivery systems would be so seamless that when someone calls in to report a problem, customer service representatives would be in a position to automatically diagnose the cause of the fault, says Acton. If necessary, they would then be able to make an appointment date and time for a service technician with the appropriate skills to fix the problem. "There would also be none of the communication breakdowns between departments that frustrate customers today."

In reality, however, the relationship between telecoms networks and the software applications allowing operators to deliver services over those networks is very complex, notes Acton. "They form a sophisticated eco-system or 'system of systems' that must come together to support seamless business processes. Knowing exactly what problems to solve in the first place is very difficult."

Simply plugging a new generic solution from a large software vendor into a complex environment of existing legacy and adapted off-the-shelf systems is rarely going to work, he points out.

"Instead, collaborate with clients to understand the problem, design a project solution, implement it and then refine it." Acton argues this goes far beyond software development, which comes right at the very end. "It's about understanding the whole telco ecosystem," he explains.

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