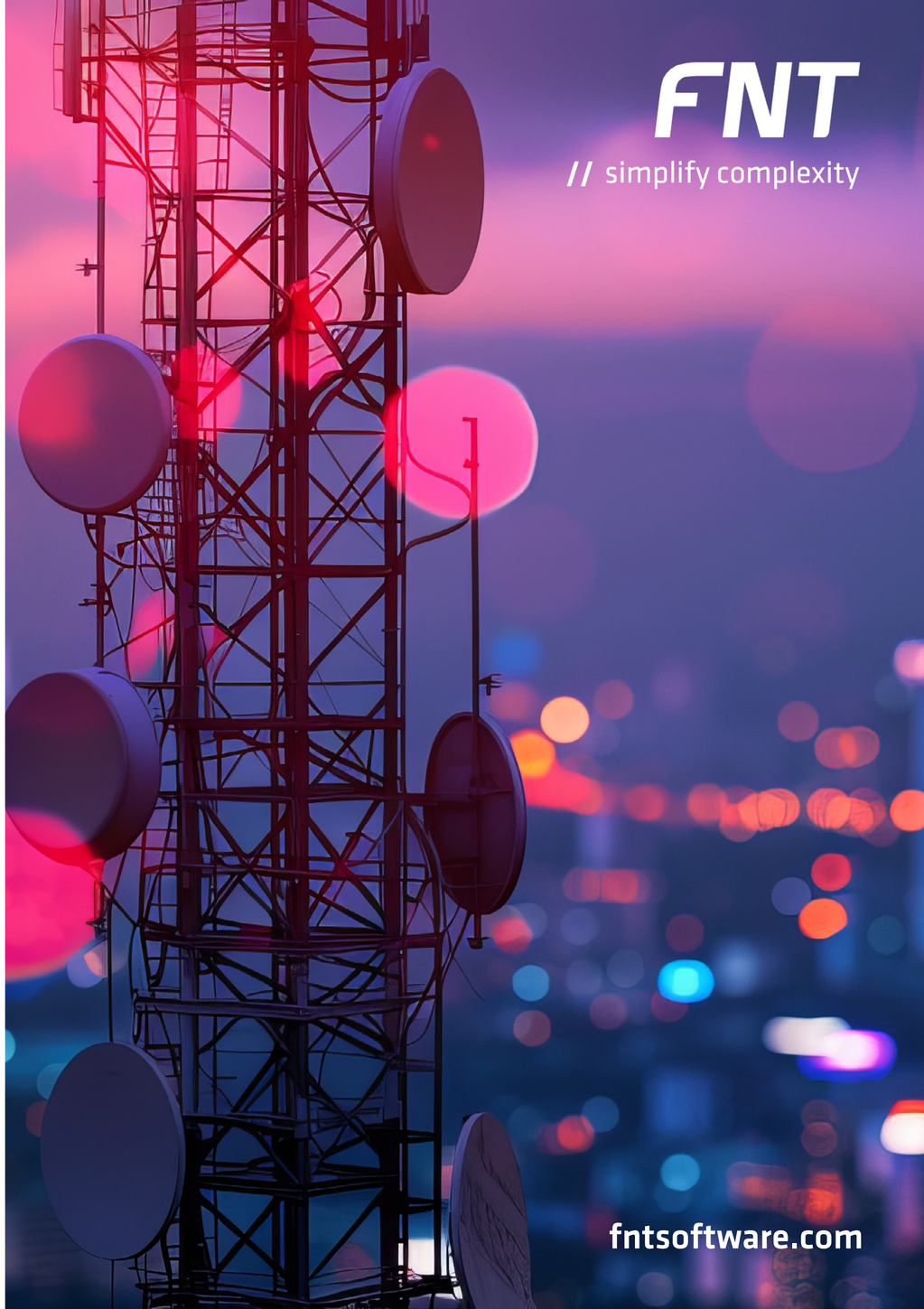
FNT Whitepaper

# Achieving Telecom Agility

## How Network Inventory, Service Catalog, and Orchestration Together Drive Faster Service Delivery

In today's dynamic networks, integrating these disparate elements is not just beneficial – it is imperative. Operators that invest in integrated solutions are better positioned to adapt to the evolving telecommunications landscape, to help maintain or extend their competitive edge.

**Read now**



# In this Whitepaper

This paper explores the critical components essential for modern telecommunications operations: network inventory, service catalogs, and orchestration tools. Learn all about their role in overcoming operational complexities and meeting rising customer expectations for faster and more reliable services.

**The paper discusses:**

- The challenges in telecom operations
- The role of the key tools: network inventory, service catalog and orchestration
- The need for integrated solutions
- The operational benefits of such solutions

This comprehensive guide positions unified tools as a cornerstone for achieving superior service delivery, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction.

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# Key Findings at a Glance

**Integration is Crucial:** Combining network inventory, service catalog, and orchestration tools is key for efficient service delivery and competitiveness.

**Automation Boosts Efficiency:** Orchestration tools reduce manual errors, speed up processes, and ensure accurate provisioning.

**Fragmented Systems Create Issues:** Disjointed tools lead to inefficiencies, delays, higher costs, and service errors.

**Customer Demands Drive Innovation:** Rapid, reliable service activation and SLA compliance are essential for meeting customer expectations.

**Network Inventory is Foundational:** It enables resource tracking, capacity planning, and efficient service activation.

**Integration Delivers Value:** Unified systems cut costs, improve coordination, and enhance customer satisfaction.

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# Introduction: The Challenges Facing Telecom Operators

In the fast-evolving landscape of telecommunications, operators encounter significant operational complexities and competitive pressures. As customer expectations rise for faster and more reliable services, telecom operators are compelled to deliver flawless service levels across all product offerings. Modern networks are becoming increasingly dynamic in nature, and are characterized by increasingly complex architectures. To remain competitive, carriers must offer a growing array of product offers, bundles and variants, all of which present unique challenges for service delivery.

The importance of effective service design, thorough service testing, and reliable service delivery can't be overstated. Service design and delivery is the engine room of telecommunications revenue streams, and is also essential for ensuring that operators meet and exceed customer expectations.

In modern OSS/BSS (Operations Support Systems / Business Support Systems) architectures, the integration of **inventory** (SRI or service / resource inventory), **service catalogs**, and **orchestration** tools is an important trio of solutions. Combined, they are crucial for optimizing service operations.

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The importance of an effective service delivery engine is reflected in the many Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are routinely monitored by network operators. These include:

**Time-to-Market (TTM):** Measures the time taken to launch a new service from concept to market, reflecting the operator's ability to quickly adapt to market demands and seize competitive opportunities

**Customer Activation or Ready for Service (RFS) Time:** Indicates the time required for a service to be fully operational after an order is placed, impacting customer satisfaction and loyalty through timely access to services

**Order Accuracy:** Reflects the percentage of correctly fulfilled orders, highlighting the quality of service delivery and reducing delays and rework costs, thereby enhancing customer trust

**Churn Rate:** Measures the percentage of customers who discontinue their service within a specific timeframe. A lower churn rate indicates better service delivery and customer retention

**Service Level Agreement (SLA) Compliance:** Tracks the percentage of service requests fulfilled within agreed timeframes. High SLA compliance rates demonstrate reliability and efficiency in service delivery

**Automation Rates:** Measures the proportion of service activation processes that are automated, with higher rates indicating greater efficiency, reduced errors, and faster service delivery

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Disjointed systems can have a significant impact on service activation times. This challenge is exacerbated by modern service expectations – where there is an increasing belief from consumers that customer activation must be near-instant.

This is particularly pronounced in the Business-to-Business (B2B) segment, where service level agreements (SLAs) are stringent, and customer expectations are even higher. For many corporate customers, digital communications aren't just nice-to-have, they are a must. Reliable communications services are fundamental to their ability to operate as a business and maintain their corporate reputation.

In the B2C (Business-to-Consumer) sector, service design and delivery is focused on high-volume, repeatable service activation. However, B2B clients often require bespoke services to accommodate unique business needs. This makes the task of building, managing, activating and assuring these complex service offerings a formidable challenge for telecom operators.

As the expectation for reliable and rapid service activation grows, so does the need for an integrated, end-to-end service delivery solution. Moreover, data-led decision making is becoming increasingly prevalent within network operators.

*In today's dynamic networks, integrating these disparate elements is not just beneficial – it is imperative. Operators that invest in integrated solutions are better positioned to adapt to the evolving telecommunications landscape, to help maintain or extend their competitive edge.*

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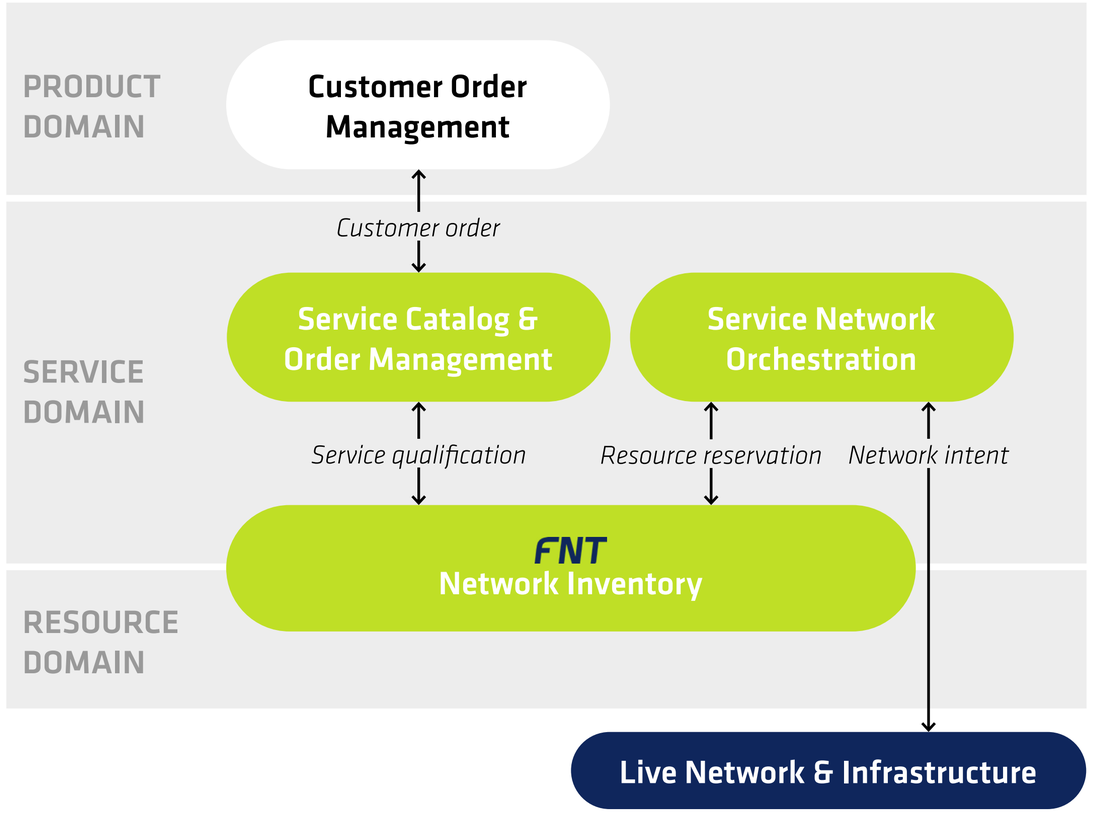
# The Role of Network Inventory, Service Catalog, and Orchestration Tools in Telecom




## Definitions and Integration

The diagram on the left provides an overview how the combined suite of products delivers end-to-end service delivery outcomes.

**Network Inventory** serves as perhaps the most foundational component of an OSS/BSS suite as it's used for managing all resources, network assets, connections, and service configurations within an entire telecommunications environment. Network Inventory solutions provide operators with a comprehensive, up-to-date view of the network landscape. This enables operators to accurately track resources and understand their current utilization.

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A holistic perspective of the network is critical for effective capacity planning and resource allocation, allowing operators to ensure that they have the necessary infrastructure in place (or on order) to fulfil customer demands efficiently.

For instance, a telecom operator using a robust network inventory system can quickly identify available fiber lines to facilitate new customer installations. It may do this during the Service Qualification (SQ), Configure / Price / Quote (CPQ), resource reservation or activation stages. By maintaining an accurate inventory of network assets, operators can also streamline maintenance processes, ensuring that upgrades and repairs do not disrupt service continuity.

The following phases are examples of where network inventory solutions help with resource allocation during customer service instantiation:

1. **Service Qualification (SQ):** This is the initial phase where network inventory helps assess the feasibility of providing service to a new customer. Operators can quickly evaluate the availability of necessary infrastructure, such as fiber lines or other network assets to support a proposed customer service

2. **Configure/Price/Quote (CPQ):** During this stage, network inventory plays a crucial role in assessing whether the configurations proposed for customer services can be supported using available resources. Supplementary builds or orders can also be initiated if some required resources are not in-situ yet

3. **Resource Reservation:** This stage involves securing the necessary resources for service delivery. An effective network inventory system allows operators to reserve resources, ensuring that the correct components are allocated for each customer's installation. More importantly, it ensures that the reserved resources can't be assigned to other service requests prior to initial service being activated

4. **Provisioning and Activation:** After resources are reserved, network inventory helps to coordinate the actual deployment of services. It enables operators to track inventory usage and ensure that all required components are aligned for a successful service activation

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**The Service Catalog component** is essential for defining and managing telecom service offerings, including pricing structures and service specifications. Service catalogs typically handle:

- **Design-time activities**, helping an operator to design a new service offering (service type)
- **Run-time** activities that help ensure repeatable instantiation of the designed product for large numbers of customers

A well-organized service catalog allows operators to respond quickly to market changes, launching new services or cloning / modifying existing offerings to meet evolving customer needs. Integration with network inventory ensures that service definitions align with available resources, minimising the risk of service delivery failures.

A practical example of rapid adaptation is the use of dynamic pricing models. Data from network inventory and service catalog solutions allow operators to adjust product offerings based on customer demand fluctuation / arbitrage. This rapid responsiveness can lead to increased revenue opportunities and enhanced customer appreciation.

**Orchestration Tools** push instructions into the network. These instructions are designed to automate and coordinate service activation, provisioning, and management processes. These tools are essential for streamlining workflows, enabling the automation of repetitive tasks. This reduces manual errors and expedites service delivery.

For example, orchestration tools can automatically trigger provisioning actions when a new service is ordered, coordinating the necessary changes across various systems—from activating network elements and establishing bearer circuits / networks, to updating billing information. This automation not only speeds up the process but also reduces the likelihood of errors or discrepancies.

## The Importance of Integration

While often designed and built to operate independently, the integration of these three components—network inventory, service catalog, and orchestration tools—can play a critical role in enabling efficient service delivery.

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# The Need for an Integrated Solution

## Current Fragmentation

The telecommunications industry currently faces significant challenges due to the costs and risks of integrations between OSS solutions. Fragmentation of essential components like network inventory, service catalogs, and orchestration tools is common. It's also common for operators to procure these systems separately from various vendors, leading to a disparate assortment of solutions that can complicate service delivery.

*The telecommunications industry currently faces significant challenges due to the costs and risks of integrations between OSS solutions.*

## Pain Points of Disjointed Systems

The disjointed nature of telecom systems introduces several critical pain points:

**Longer Implementation Cycles:** The integration of systems without pre-built connectors is often much longer. Operators often invest significant resources in custom integrations, which can delay the rollout of new service types and hinder responsiveness to market changes. When catalog and inventory systems are separate, it's common for an engineer to spend time manually confirming the availability of fiber links and customer ports. These delays ripple through each service implementation, extending service activation timelines unnecessarily.

**Increased Operational Costs:** Developing custom integrations also increases what is known as the "integration tax." Whether developed in-house (often as the responsibility of different

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internal product owners) or through relationships with multiple vendors, synchronizing disparate systems, can significantly increase operational costs. Duplicated efforts and manual interventions during resource allocation and activation can drive up operational costs in the service delivery cycle.

**Inconsistent Data:** When systems are designed by separate vendors in isolation, misaligned data, interface specifications and processes often arise. These inconsistencies can prevent an operator from accurately tracking and reporting on service delivery performance. It can also make it more difficult to identify issues and prolonging resolution times. A lack of integration between inventory and the orchestrator can lead to mismatched data, where outdated inventory records cause service activation errors and require costly rework to align systems.

**Overhead and Risk:** The necessity of managing multiple vendors or internal stakeholders introduces additional technical, operational and human-factor risk. Increased complexity raises the likelihood of miscommunication and errors, further complicating the service fulfilment process. Managing multiple domains / vendors and siloed processes can increase the complexity and risk of fall-outs, delays or errors during service fulfilment.

The consequences of fragmentation extend beyond operational inefficiencies. The cumulative effect of these pain points can significantly damage a telecom operator's brand reputation. In an era where customer loyalty is paramount, service outages or delays can lead to dissatisfaction, customer churn, and ultimately, lost revenue.

Moreover, as telecom operators expand their service offerings to include more complex B2B solutions, the challenges associated with fragmented systems become amplified.

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# The Concept of a Pre-Integrated Solution

In light of these challenges, the need for a pre-integrated solution becomes apparent. Such solutions offer a unified platform to simplify implementation, delivering:

**Streamlined Service Delivery:** A pre-integrated solution enables seamless data flow between components, reducing the risk of errors and delays. With all necessary information housed in a single, or jointly-designed platform, operators can deliver services more efficiently.

**Faster Time-to-Market:** The combined nature of these solutions allows for quicker adaptation to market demands. Operators can launch new services with greater speed, meeting customer needs in real-time and gaining a competitive advantage.

**Enhanced Data Consistency:** A unified approach ensures that all components rely on a consistent dataset. This reliability not only enhances tracking and reporting capabilities but also improves overall service quality.

**Reduced Total Cost of Ownership:** By minimising the need for custom integrations and multiple vendor management, operators can significantly lower their total cost of ownership. This reduction frees up resources for innovation and further investments in technology.

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# How an Integrated Solution Drives Service Activation Efficiencies

## Benefits of Integration

An integrated solution that combines network inventory, service catalog, and orchestration tools offers numerous advantages that significantly enhance service activation efficiencies.

### Coordination of Resources

In many telecom organizations, these tools are often owned and operated by different groups or departments, leading to significant challenges in cross-silo coordination. Each group may have its own priorities, processes, and systems, making it difficult to achieve alignment and agreement on service designs and implementation. This fragmentation can result in delays, miscommunication, and inefficiencies, hindering the overall service activation process.

By consolidating these tools into a unified system, telecom operators can enhance coordination among different teams, facilitating smoother workflows and clearer communication. This consolidated approach promotes modularity and separation of concerns, allowing teams to focus on their specific areas of expertise while still contributing to a cohesive service delivery framework. With a shared platform, operators can streamline processes, reduce the risk of errors, and accelerate time-to-market, ultimately leading to improved customer satisfaction and operational efficiency.

### Fall-out Minimisation

When the three elements are designed and operated in isolation, there is the potential for fall-outs (incorrect, mismatched or incomplete hand-offs between systems) to increase significantly.

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A fall-out in any single activity or hand-off along a service chain can lead to longer service activation times. They also result in increased operational costs due to manual interventions and higher rates of errors, ultimately impacting customer satisfaction and brand reputation.

A unified system enhances visibility and control over the end-to-end service fulfilment process. By establishing a complete data lineage through the integrated platform, operators can ensure consistent data flows, enabling better decision-making and operational agility. This integration is particularly important when managing complex service offerings that cross multiple teams and systems.

## Coordinated Design-Time and Run-Time Functionality

Understanding the distinction between design-time and run-time utilization of the service catalog is essential for operators when considering end-to-end integrations.

**Design-time** involves configuring and managing service offerings, including defining service specifications, attributes, and pricing while designing workflows to guide deployment. Orchestration plans ensure smooth and consistent integration between systems by mapping data fields and APIs to adjacent systems, setting the stage for efficient service implementation.

If services are not adequately defined, fields aren't correctly mapped or if workflows are inefficient, the subsequent run-time phase may encounter significant challenges including fall-outs and SLA breaches.

**Run-time** focuses on executing customer service instances, invoking orchestration plans consistently and accessing real-time data from systems like inventory and orchestrators. Continuous monitoring ensures exceptional service performance, with adjustments made as needed to maintain KPIs and fulfil SLAs.

*Understanding the distinction between design-time and run-time utilisation of the service catalog is essential for operators when considering end-to-end integrations.*

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## Unified Service Design

Another advantage of an integrated solution is the ability to facilitate a unified service design. By streamlining both design-time and run-time processes, operators can create and manage service offerings in a cohesive environment.

For example, when launching a new service, operators can quickly prototype and test service definitions within the unified system, reducing the time spent on coordination between different teams. This efficiency not only speeds up the go-to-market process but also enhances the overall quality of service design by ensuring that all aspects—technical specifications, pricing, team coordination and inventory availability—are harmonized from the outset.

## End-to-End Service Lifecycle Management

Integrated solutions also enable comprehensive end-to-end service lifecycle management. This capability encompasses the entire service delivery process, from initial design and provisioning to ongoing management and support. With an integrated approach, operators can ensure that every stage of the service lifecycle is optimally managed, reducing the likelihood of delays and errors.

For instance, when a service is activated, orchestration tools can automatically trigger the necessary provisioning actions across all relevant systems. This includes updating network configurations, notifying billing systems, and informing customer service teams of the new service launch. It can even initiate network augmentation orders when network capacity thresholds are approaching. Such automation minimizes the risk of miscommunication and human error, ensuring a smooth transition from order to fulfilment.

**WORTH TO KNOW**

Intent-driven orchestration focuses on defining the desired outcome (intent), regardless of the underlying networks, topologies, vendors or data models. Rather than specifying step-by-step processes, an intent-based approach allows systems to dynamically determine the best way to achieve the objective. This automates decision-making and resource allocation in near-real-time, ensuring efficient and adaptive service delivery. This approach also reduces orchestration complexity, improves agility and brings a level of consistency across an otherwise disjointed network environment.

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## Streamlined Service Activation

The automation of service activation (run-time) processes is another key benefit of integration. By coordinating workflows across network inventory, service catalog, and orchestration tools, operators can simultaneously manage many customer instances efficiently. This capability is particularly valuable when dealing with high volumes of service requests, as it enables operators to handle large-scale deployments without sacrificing quality.

Consider a scenario where a telecom operator receives a surge in requests for a new business internet service. An integrated solution allows for rapid provisioning of multiple customer orders, automating processes that would traditionally require manual intervention. This not only accelerates service delivery but also ensures timely fulfilment of service requests.

## Faster Time-to-Value

The seamless integration of all key components significantly decreases deployment times, allowing operators to realize value more quickly after implementation. The reduction in time-to-value is particularly important in a market where competitive pressures demand rapid innovation and responsiveness.

For example, a telecom operator that integrates its service activation processes can reduce the time it takes to launch a new product from months to weeks. This rapid time-to-market enables the operator to seize opportunities and respond to customer demands without unnecessary delays, ultimately leading to increased revenue potential.

## Real-time Resource Allocation

Modern telecommunications networks require dynamic resource allocation to meet evolving customer demands. An integrated solution supports real-time monitoring of resource utilization, enabling operators to identify capacity bottlenecks and trigger automatic capacity adjustments as needed.

For instance, if a particular network segment approaches capacity limits due to increased demand, the integrated system can automatically allocate additional resources or initiate provisioning for necessary upgrades. To illustrate: during a peak load event, the system recognizes that a network segment is nearing

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capacity limits prior to service provisioning. It then dynamically assigns additional Virtual Machines (VMs) to host VNFs, while also provisioning extra bearer capacity to manage the extra load introduced by this service. This real-time resource allocation ensures seamless service delivery and prevents performance degradation. This proactive approach not only mitigates the risk of service interruptions but also ensures that operators can maintain high service levels, even during peak usage periods.

## Customer Transparency

Enhanced access to end-to-end process data allows for improved service delivery status tracking. This transparency is particularly beneficial for B2B customers, which expect timely updates on their service requests. Integrated solutions more readily provide customers with real-time visibility into their service status, enabling them to track the progress of their orders and receive notifications against key milestones.

For example, a B2B customer using an operator's service portal can view the current status of their service activation, including when the service is scheduled to go live and any outstanding tasks that may need to be completed. This level of transparency can be vital when the client is coordinating complex projects such as equipping a new office with necessary equipment where communications services are just one of many activities that need to be seamlessly coordinated.

*In summary, an integrated solution that streamlines the entire lifecycle from service design to automated provisioning and enhanced customer transparency, delivers clear operational advantages.*

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# Use Cases of Integrated Solutions in Action

The following use cases illustrate the benefits of integrated solutions:

Scenario 1:

## End to End Network Automation

Network and service automation offer significant benefits for CSPs managing complex multi-domain networks. A service orchestrator and a unified network inventory are two key components to achieve this. In practice, however, it is often a long way before you can benefit from the implementation of such a solution.

**FNT** and **Inmanta** jointly created a blueprint for an incremental approach towards end-to-end service and network automation. This incremental approach addresses the minimum required scope with maximum accuracy of the unified network inventory for the service orchestrator to deploy services.

Learn all about the benefits of the joint solution in our whitepaper **From Zero to Hero in 6 Months: The Incremental Approach to End-to-End Network Automation**.

DOWNLOAD

Scenario 2:

## Integrated Production Platform

The fiber network market is highly competitive, with new fiber operators entering the market and intensifying competition. Private equity investment and government support are driving this trend. To stay ahead, companies must continuously innovate and offer cutting-edge solutions that address the individual needs and challenges of fiber network operators.

**FNT** and **alvatross** have joined forces to deliver an integrated OSS and network infrastructure platform.

From end-to-end network management to specialized tools for monitoring, troubleshooting, and provisioning, the joint solution is a key enabler for companies aiming to thrive in the dynamic and rapidly growing fiber network market.

Read all about the benefits of the joint solution in our whitepaper **The Integrated Production Platform: Integrated Order Manager, Activation & Network Infrastructure Platform**.

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*An integrated approach not only streamlines operations but also ensures that telecom operators can respond swiftly and effectively to changing market demands.*

# Conclusion: The Future of Telecom Service Activation

As the telecommunications industry continues to seek competitive advantages, the integration of network inventory, service catalog, and orchestration tools emerges as a pivotal strategy for operators to enhance their service activation processes. The challenges posed by fragmented systems and disjointed workflows are significant, so the potential benefits of an integrated solution are substantial.

An integrated approach not only streamlines operations but also ensures that telecom operators can respond swiftly and effectively to changing market demands. By establishing a cohesive framework that aligns all critical components, operators can achieve a new level of operational awareness in service delivery. This integration facilitates faster service activation, reduced operational costs, and improved accuracy, ultimately leading to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Moreover, as customer expectations continue to rise, the need for transparency and real-time service updates becomes increasingly important. Integrated

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solutions empower telecom operators to provide customers with enhanced visibility into their service statuses, fostering trust and confidence in their ability to deliver reliable services. This level of transparency is especially crucial for B2B clients, who often operate under stringent SLAs and require timely information to manage their operations effectively.

Looking to the future, the telecommunications landscape will continue to depend on operators' ability to innovate and adapt. The integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and predictive analytics into these unified solutions will further enhance operational capabilities. By leveraging data-driven insights, operators can anticipate customer needs, optimise resource allocation, cross-sell, up-sell and refine service offerings to stay ahead of the competition.

The path forward is clear: telecom operators must embrace integrated solutions as a fundamental component of their business strategy. Those who invest in integrated frameworks today will be better equipped to meet the challenges of tomorrow, ensuring they can deliver exceptional service and maintain a competitive edge.

The time for telecom operators to act is now. We invite you to explore FNT's integrated solutions to discover how they can transform your service delivery and operational efficiency .

Thank you for reading our whitepaper on the importance of modern, integrated network inventory, service catalog and orchestration solutions for service providers and network operators. At FNT Software, we understand the challenges that service providers face in managing their service lifecycles, and we have the expertise and solutions to help.

Don't let legacy service delivery approaches hold you back. Contact us today and let us help you navigate your modern service delivery landscape with confidence.

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# About FNT

FNT GmbH, headquartered in Ellwangen (Jagst), Germany, simplifies the management of highly complex digital infrastructures in companies and public authorities with its FNT Command Platform. With the cloud-enabled “software made in Germany”, IT, telecommunications and data center infrastructures can be efficiently recorded as digital twins and documented across all levels from buildings to digital services. The software also offers open interfaces and numerous functions for planning, implementing and automating transformations and changes in an integrated manner. FNT’s customers include more than 500 companies and government agencies worldwide, including more than half of the DAX-40 listed corporations. FNT operates offices in several locations in Germany as well as in New York, Singapore and Timisoara and has an international partner system with market-leading IT service providers and system integrators.

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