



In partnership with:

Rakuten
Symphony

ACHIEVING AUTOMATION AT SPEED

Webinar: Questions and Answers

Questions and Answers:

This document outlines the questions and answers received from the STL Partners & Rakuten Symphony webinar, “Achieving automation at speed”

You can watch the recording of the session, and also access the slides, using the link [here](#). In this document, we seek to address the questions raised in the webinar that we were unable to address in the time available.

*The presentation is based on insights and findings from our research report where we explored how telcos need to embrace automation-at-speed and why this will help to bring innovation back into the telecoms sector. **You can access the full research report [here](#).***

If you have any questions not addressed in the webinar or this Q&A document, or want to hear more about our latest research or from our panellists, please contact:

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1. What's your view on autonomous networks? Should we expect a shift from automation to autonomous networks and operations?

STL Partners: Absolutely, the evolution from automation to autonomous networks is the next progression. Automation operates within predefined boundaries, executing tasks based on (human defined) set rules. Autonomous systems, however, continuously learn and adapt to dynamic surroundings, leveraging broader datasets beyond initial envisaged. This evolution towards autonomy doesn't nullify automation; rather, it enhances it. Systems originally automated can integrate autonomous capabilities, ensuring adaptability to evolving environments, thereby extending their utility and effectiveness. So, yes, the shift towards autonomous networks is a natural progression, enhancing efficiency and reliability in operations.

Rakuten Symphony: We can definitely expect a shift to autonomous networks but that is yet to come/happen, as it depends on all network functions to be deployed such that they can scale/change automatically (based on triggers derived by complex logic based on multiple data sources: both network and customer related) and that can only happen once everything is software based and deployed in a cloud native software stack

2. How do you manage changing scope of automation during the development cycle?

STL Partners: Adopting agile approaches and building in some resource and timing flexibility is crucial in managing changing automation scopes during development. Establish a modular framework that

allows additions and modifications without disrupting the system. Regular evaluations, iterative cycles, and open communication ensure alignment with evolving needs while maintaining reliability.

Rakuten Symphony: For us each automation use-cases/initiative is a project. Depending on the integration scope of that automation we pick the best delivery methodology (we usually aim for agile based management) and if for example there are changes that depend on additional integration points/data sources that we can deliver in sprints with clearly outlined functionalities in each sprint, all with the purpose users to have continuous benefits and not wait long for a whole waterfall cycle to finish in order to go live.

3. There are more than systems to bring automation. How you see interoperability between different providers?

Rakuten Symphony: We are aware of the complexity and integration challenges when implementing E2E telco concepts that go across multiple systems both vertically and horizontally. That's why we built our product to be able to support not just ReST (typical for cloud native SW) but also CLI (able to do command line calls and consume results), read into RAW performance files and/or consume info from other text-based files that are outputted by other systems. All the above said will result into an implementation integration scope that will have to go through SIT and UAT. Another thing we are bringing to the table is compliance with TMF ReST interfaces in order to simplify and speed-up integration with solution providers that are also aligning their interfaces to TMF standards.

4. The traditional approach of automating the existing human workflows still seems to be the norm in telecoms. Getting operators to spend the time/effort/cost required to be ready for truly transformative is sometimes an insurmountable task. Is this your experience? What really helps operators (and vendors) really understand the better way to automate?

Rakuten Symphony: One of key factors for kickstarting automations org-wide under the networks domain is to assemble a core team that will bring the transformation initiative forwards under the leadership of the CTO. And this is not a small task simply because not all stakeholders are enough IT verse to comprehend the technical benefits. That's why we help customers first identify the problems prime for automation and then build a business case that can show tangible business outcomes from day one.

Another problem I see often is focusing too much on per domain use-cases that don't explicitly represent the scale of speed and savings compared to an org wide implementation. For that we work with the customers to help them capture and depict how the automation concept can scale across the org and also address implicit use-cases (not visible when talking to per domain owners)

Transforming the mindset and old habits in the org-structure is also another obstacle and that needs some in-house training like: bringing the teams to design thinking training so they understand the impact of changes on the end customer service and also root them out from their SME/per domain thinking.

5. What types of relevant processes have you successfully automated in an operator? performance? Operations? Others?

Rakuten Symphony: All operation processes are something that can be automated and for that to become a reality we first introduce our automation concept aligned with the given customer business

processes. Then we identify the use cases and integration points and at the end focus on not just automated problem identification but also problem resolution automation.

Automating performance reports generation and broadcast/delivery to the targeted users I see more as a part of functionalities that a performance monitoring umbrella should offer as a capability, however those same reports or triggers for reports can be also triggers for kicking off automation tasks.

One other aspect that I like highlighting is that it's not just network and pure performance that should be factors for kicking off an automation task (check, or change, or just monitor) but also CEM data that gives us insight into the customer behaviour and OTT services should be combined into the RCA logic. This gives the opportunity to even do nothing if there is no significant customer impact in case something happens in the network.

6. My company's automation initiatives have been growing but it happens in siloes - as to solving specific problems or to improve specific processes. What's your opinion?

Rakuten Symphony: It's key to drive the initiative horizontally, with support from the management as a top-down vision and bring all relevant decision makers in a single forum where strategic positioning should be done. Otherwise in the interest of time, all verticals will drive their problems internally and at the end the org will end up with duplicating costs in various teams instead of a single TCO across all verticals. I've witnessed this in my carrier often.

Another thing that it's often overlooked is the change management (people, process, tools, training needs) as it's not enough to just by a tool, change needs to happen org-wide for everyone to ripe the benefits. I am aware that customers sometimes lack the skillset to ramp-up the right team and that's where we come in to handhold and help the customer while in parallel dealing with the delivery in order to save time and reduce project cost.

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