

## Simplifying Supplier Relationships

In recent years, companies have found themselves purchasing telecoms services from an ever-increasing number of different suppliers. As a result, spend is being spread across multiple providers and the associated administration can detract from higher value telecoms activities. In 2011, it seems the tide is beginning to turn. The MDS Connecting with Business Customers report finds telecoms managers handling an average of 3.4 supplier relationships, 2.9 of these relationships being managed online. Figure 5 shows a more detailed breakdown of CSP usage.

Against this backdrop, more than one in three (38%) businesses has plans to reduce the number of CSPs they deal with. For almost all of these companies (96%), this seems to equate to a move to unified communications. Unified communications resonates with perennial telecoms must-haves of reliability, availability, scalability, ease of use and management and low total cost of ownership and importantly brings simplicity to something that has become increasingly complex in recent years. For most planning unified communications, this is likely to be implemented in the next two years (46% say in the next year, 43% say in one to two years). Alongside this, from a CSP perspective, servicing telecoms managers with a single

customer experience, regardless of whether the customer is using mobile, fixed or data is a compelling proposition as companies strive for cost control and transparency.

Although three quarters of telecoms managers see service level agreements (SLAs) with CSPs as important (74%), opinion is divided as to whether these are best managed online or in person and there is certainly scope to include real time tracking (43%) and analytical tools (24%) in managing SLAs. With almost three in four supplier relationships having an online component, the report explored levels of satisfaction amongst telecoms managers with the online service they generally receive. Figure 6 shows that although few would describe themselves as dissatisfied (4%), a substantial 44% consider themselves to be neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and as such there is certainly room for improvement as far as online services are concerned. Specific improvements relate to improving customer service, ease of use, speed of response and a desire for more or better analytics and reporting capability specific to the way a company is organised. Such improvements may seem diverse but all point to a demand for a more user-friendly, even customised, online experience.

Figure 5: Number of CSPs used and managed online

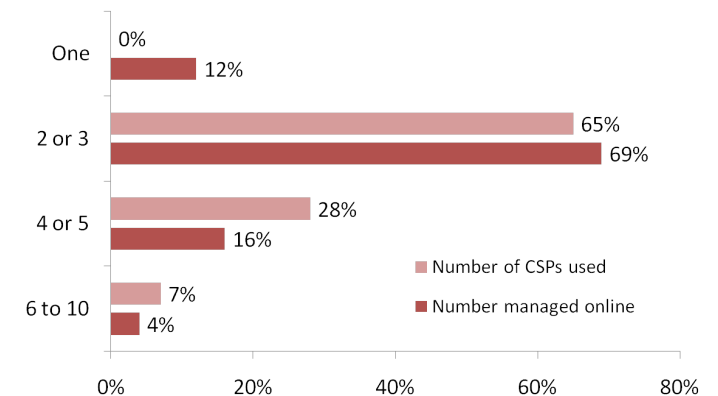


Figure 6: Satisfaction with online service

