

How to give enterprises exactly what they want when it comes to data

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The holidays may be behind us, but the season for giving isn't over by a long shot. In the past, we convinced customers to purchase certain products on their merits. Now, we spend our time listening to what solutions our customers need, and in so doing, we focus our energies on giving customers what they want.

Sales veterans quickly see the problem with this new paradigm. Customers say they know what they want to do, but do they also know why and how? It's easy to be intimidated by the rapid acceleration of technology and our growing reliance on data. Budget demands are increasing, capex dollars are getting scarce, and good talent is hard to find. Enterprises usually don't have the time or the resources to custom-build new networks in a rapidly morphing environment.

Helping customers answer the "why" and "how" that drives their business decisions may be one of the most valuable things a technology solutions company like Lumen Technologies can offer, because we can define "why" and "how" in a way that helps ensure mutual success for both parties.

A Thumbtack And String

The "future" of work might be murky, because we expect more and more workers to leave their offices and rely upon remote or hybrid models instead. This shift creates more stress on network performance, as employees rely upon remote connections to access the data and applications they need.

Recently, I have been thinking a lot about the old BASF commercials from the 1980s. If you remember them, you know that BASF didn't make products; it just made them better. In the same way, Lumen doesn't provide the data and the applications. We make them perform better by using Edge Compute to significantly reduce latency.

To better understand the power of Edge Compute, think about using a pencil attached to a string and anchoring it with a thumbtack. You can draw a perfect circle. With Edge Compute, any customer within that circle can connect directly to one of our physical nodes and get the same level service as if we were connecting directly to their premise. When we complete our initial Edge Compute rollout in 2021, we expect to have enough "circles" in place to cover 98% of U.S. enterprise demand, designed for 5 milliseconds of latency or better, which [according to a recent IDC study](#), should meet the expectations of 90% of the enterprises they surveyed.*

What Have You Done For Me Lately?

The challenge of remote or hybrid work environments requires a degree of nimbleness that can make some enterprises uncomfortable. They want the flexibility to control how much data capacity and connectivity they need, so they can react quickly to changing conditions. In the same IDC study, which talked to leaders within a wide range of industries, 44% said they prefer a managed service based on usage or a subscription when considering new edge solutions.*

As companies focus on paying for shifting levels of performance to meet changing workloads, they need real-time consulting to help them manage change rather than let change manage them. We have retooled our entire account management philosophy by adding a new customer engagement model called Customer Success. A dedicated team works directly with enterprises to understand their business needs, track the overall performance of our solutions, and anticipate opportunities that can improve business outcomes. They can provide answers to the "why" while establishing personal relationships that help ensure the "how."

In the end, the "gift that keeps on giving" is people. People drive a company's entrepreneurial spirit, no matter how young or old it might be. It's the willingness of a company to invest in both people and technology that allows it to adjust to what a customer wants today, while staying flexible enough to deliver a stream of new solutions tomorrow.

* IDC InfoBrief, "Edge Computing Solutions Powering the Fourth Industrial Revolution," Doc.

#US47222020, January 2021.

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