

COTS Project: Steering Group

Meeting held on 22 February 2010

@ Intellect, Russell Square House, 10-12 Russell Square, WC1B 5EE



MINUTES (ABRIDGED)

1) Welcome and introduction

MT welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made around the table.

2) Review of issues raised to date, and proposed area of focus for COTS

Peter Shearman (PS) began by reviewing the discussion the group held last time out. This ended with participants agreeing that BT's Standard Interconnect Agreement (SIA) should be used as a framework for identifying the issues that an aggregator would need to address. However, since this meeting it has become clear that this is not sufficient for addressing the issues that COTS need to address – the input received offline from steering group members has confirmed this.

PS highlighted the two conclusions that the work of the steering group had drawn to date.

1. There is a need for aggregation in some form if COTS is to achieve its goal.
2. There is a possibility for a commercial solution to emerge that provides the required aggregation.

The question from these two conclusions then becomes how best the COTS steering group can support the development of a commercial solution, how far this can be taken, and at what stage is there a need to allow the market to address this challenge.

The group has previously identified three areas where there is a need for COTS activity: product; process; and commercials. This is reflected in the short-list of COTS issues.

- The product requirements will likely follow the way the rest of the market develops, or will at least follow its lead; therefore, given the previous group agreement that ALA provides an appropriate standard to work with and that passive infrastructure solutions are being considered elsewhere, there is little to be done at this stage by the COTS Project.
- The commercial requirements would reflect the solutions in the other two areas; there is the possibility that a framework agreement with standard boilerplates could be usefully developed by the group, but these would likely be incomplete until other issues had been resolved.
- The process requirements, however, require work. Part of this involves developing the B2B interface work undertaken by CSMG for Ofcom, along with developing other supporting and enabling processes. This work is product-agnostic, so can be undertaken without resolution of issues in other areas.

Regarding B2B interfaces, the aggregation function has two requirements:

1. CP-facing, for which the requirements are fairly well known – the interface must be as similar as possible to their existing systems i.e. EMP.
2. AIP-facing, which is more complex as it involves a range of different solutions.

Therefore, PS asked whether a good next step for the group would be to consider how to simplify the AIP-facing aspect of the interface for an aggregator, in order to facilitate a simpler market solution. This could involve understanding best practice, providing a goal for all to move towards using systems with common features, and/or building on the NICC's existing B2B work. A further important part of this discussion would be to gain further clarity on exactly what CPs want – any solution could work for an aggregator, or to facilitate a direct relationship between an AIP and a CP, without an intermediary.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- There is a need to avoid duplicating work undertaken elsewhere.
- There was agreement that the group needed to understand how far the work of NICC had gone and what its relevance might be.
- The role of EMP, and what exactly CPs mean by the phrase 'EMP-like', needed to be further explored as part of this debate.
- There is also a need to understand how those who could provide solutions in this space would address the problem – understanding what is possible from these stakeholders could be a useful step forward.
- A workshop event, with a range of interested stakeholders, should be run in order to further this debate. This would include operators, system vendors and representatives from the TPI community.
- Migrations would also be a useful issue to address from a technical perspective, particularly in light of any Ofcom activity on the issue later in the year.

Actions arising

- Secretariat to circulate details of NICC B2B work
- Secretariat to draft the problem statement for workshop attendees to respond to
- Secretariat to organise workshop, to take place before Easter
- Steering group members to review the NICC work prior to workshop
- Secretariat to organise a working group on migration.

END