Benefits of using the eTOM:

- eTOM makes available a standard structure, terminology and classification scheme for describing business processes and their constituent building blocks

- eTOM supplies a foundation for applying enterprise-wide discipline to the development of business processes

- eTOM provides a basis for understanding and managing portfolios of IT applications in terms of business process requirements

- eTOM enables creation of consistent and high-quality end-to-end process flows, with opportunities for cost and performance improvement, and for re-use of existing processes and systems

- eTOM use across the industry will increase the likelihood that off-the-shelf applications will be readily integrated into the enterprise, at a lower cost than custom-built applications

In use by hundreds of companies around the world, accepted as a formal standard by the ITU-T, and translated into 6 languages, the eTOM is truly the business process heart of the TM Forum's New Generation Operations Systems and Software (NGOSS) framework. By providing the industry with a common structure for defining and sharing business processes, the eTOM enables service providers and their suppliers to work together to understand the current state of their business activities, identify improvements, and define new processes to streamline the business.

Overview

The telecom industry is up against unprecedented challenges in the face of more competition, higher customer expectations, falling market share and growing price pressures, all while networks and services are converging. The industry has a need to clearly define and understand the business processes involved with running a telecom business in a competitive environment in order to be profitable.

The Enhanced Telecom Operations Map® (known throughout the industry as eTOM) is an ongoing TM Forum initiative to deliver a business process model or framework for use by service providers and their suppliers of products and services within the telecommunications industry. The eTOM sets a vision for the industry to enable it to compete successfully through the implementation of business process-driven approaches to managing the telecom enterprise. This includes ensuring integration among all vital OSS/BSS systems that deliver and support services to customers.

The eTOM provides the "process common language" within the TM Forum New Generation Operations Systems and Software (NGOSS) toolkit. It is a reference framework for categorizing all the business activities that a service provider will use, in a structured manner, and addresses them at various levels of detail. The focus of the eTOM is on the business processes, the linkages between these processes, the identification of interfaces, and the use of customer, service, resource, supplier/partner and other information by multiple processes.

Using the eTOM

The eTOM Business Process Framework can be used as a tool for analyzing existing processes and for developing new processes. Different processes delivering the same business functionality can be identified, duplication eliminated, gaps revealed, new process design speeded up, and variance reduced. Using eTOM, the value, cost and performance of individual processes within an organization can be assessed.

The eTOM assists in facilitating relationships with suppliers and partners by identifying and categorizing the processes used in interactions with them. In a similar manner, the all-important customer relationship processes can be identified and evaluated for whether they are functioning as required to meet customers' expectations.

The eTOM defines a business-oriented view of the service provider's enterprise. This view is useful for planners, managers, and strategists who need to view the enterprise in business terms, without immediate concern for the way that these business needs are organized or automated within the business. The eTOM emphasizes process structure, process components, process interactivity and the business roles and responsibilities to which these relate. As such, the eTOM provides a basis for setting requirements for system solutions, technical architectures, technology choices and implementation paths, but it is neutral towards the particular way that these requirements are met.

The eTOM represents an industry-consensus on the service provider processes based on TM Forum member contributions. In using the eTOM, this consensus view will typically be tailored and/or extended for use within an individual company.

Inside the eTOM

The eTOM begins at the Enterprise level and defines business processes in a series of groupings. The eTOM uses a hierarchical decomposition to structure the business processes and defines process descriptions, inputs and outputs, as well as other key elements for each process at each level. The eTOM process modeling includes views of functionality that span horizontally across an enterprise's internal organization. For example, managing customer relationships spans an enterprise from marketing to ordering to billing to after-service support and follow-on sales. The eTOM framework also groups processes in a vertical "swim lane" approach that drives end-to-end process and process flow-through between the customer and the supporting services, resources and supplier/partners.

At the overall conceptual level, eTOM can be viewed as having the following three major process areas:

Strategy, Infrastructure & Product covering planning and lifecycle management

Operations covering the core of operational management

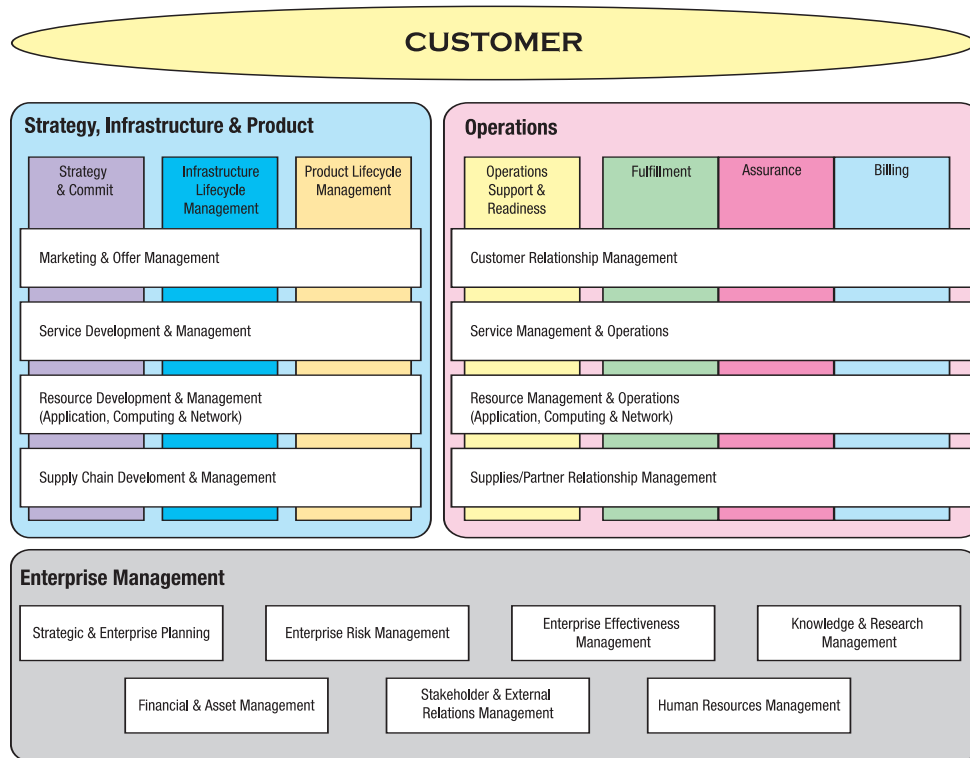Enterprise Management covering corporate or business support management

Figure 1

The eTOM Framework contains seven end-to-end vertical process groupings that are the processes required to support customers and to manage the business. The focal point of the eTOM is the core customer operations processes of Fulfillment, Assurance and Billing (FAB) under Operations. Operations Support & Readiness (OSR) forms the fourth vertical grouping under Operations, and is differentiated from FAB real-time processes to focus on enabling support and automation processes in FAB. The Strategy, Infrastructure & Product (SIP) process area contains the Strategy & Commit vertical, as well as the two Lifecycle Management verticals. These processes are distinct because, unlike Operations, they do not directly support the customer and work on different business time cycles.

The eTOM also includes horizontal views of functionality across a service provider's organization. The horizontal functional process groupings in Figure 1 distinguish functional operations processes and other types of business functional processes, e.g., Marketing versus Selling, Service Development versus Service Configuration, etc. Amongst these Horizontal Functional Process Groupings, those on the left (that cross the Strategy & Commit, Infrastructure Lifecycle Management and Product Lifecycle Management vertical process groupings) enable, support and direct the work in the Operations process area.

Under each of the process areas describe above, which are known as Level 0 processes, the eTOM contains more and more detailed decompositions of processes, at Levels 1, 2, and 3. The level number is an indication of the degree of detail revealed at that level - the higher the number, the more detailed the process elements described.