

# Winning the next wave of B2B ICT growth

A strategic playbook for telecom operators: where to play, what to own, how to industrialise to deliver

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# Winning the next wave of B2B ICT

The next decade of B2B ICT growth will not be won through broader portfolios or greater technology complexity. It will be won through sharper choices about where to participate, what to own and how to scale repeatable delivery.

## Deliberate participation choices, outcome-led delivery, modern execution

### Synopsis

As B2B ICT revenue continues to expand, value is shifting toward outcome-led propositions, integrated SLAs and managed service layers. Most providers now understand where the value pools sit; those best positioned to win will make four connected choices: define how they participate, focus on use cases where network and platform capabilities materially influence outcomes, retain the commercial and service control points that protect value, and industrialise delivery through reusable products, partners, data and automation. This includes agentic AI, which enables increasingly coordinated work and decisions across the operating model.



## Deliberate participation choices, outcome-led delivery, modern execution

### Executive summary

B2B ICT continues to grow, but the basis of competition is changing. Value is moving beyond standalone connectivity toward managed services, integrated SLAs and providers willing to take accountability for customer outcomes.

For operators facing financial pressure, this is both a growth and value-protection agenda. Connectivity remains the essential foundation, but the most attractive opportunities increasingly depend on how it is packaged, assured and combined with services higher up the stack.

Capturing the opportunity requires greater prioritisation and choice. Operators need to concentrate investment on the verticals, use cases and layers of the technology stack where they have the strongest right to win, can build repeatable propositions and can generate attractive returns.

Winners make explicit choices about how to play and where to play. They select a participation model aligned to their assets and capabilities, then focus on verticals and use cases where network capabilities materially shape the customer outcome and create a defensible right to win.

Operators must also decide what to own. Greater outcome ownership can unlock more value, but it brings greater complexity and risk. The critical control point is the integrated SLA: operators should retain accountability for the customer proposition, service integration and performance commitments, while partnering for specialised capabilities where appropriate.

Execution is the differentiator. Capturing value requires repeatable propositions, modular products, disciplined pricing, orchestrated partners and a common solution and service factory that protects service performance and in-life margin.

The commercial model must evolve alongside delivery. A joined-up commercial engine should connect customer insight, proposition development, demand generation, sales, pricing, deal governance, delivery and renewal, while adapting the customer experience to the needs of enterprise, mid-market and SMB buyers.

B2B growth and operating-model modernisation should be pursued together. artificial intelligence (AI) supported decision-making, automated fulfilment and assurance, shared data and clearer end-to-end accountability can improve customer outcomes, reduce cost-to-serve and protect margin.

Agentic AI should raise ambitions far beyond automation of standalone tasks. Rather than simply applying AI to existing processes, there is an opportunity to rethink workflows, decision rights and organisational boundaries.

Corporate structure is therefore a strategic lever. Autonomy, decision rights and governance determine whether focused B2B propositions can move at market speed or remain constrained by legacy complexity and fragmented ownership.

The operators best positioned to win will not pursue every available opportunity. They will make sharper choices about where to play, what to own and how to scale, using targeted B2B growth to deliver near-term value while building the leaner, digital-first operating model required through the 2030s.

# ONE

## The case for change: The B2B ICT opportunity remains, but the basis of competition is changing

### 1.1

#### **Value is moving up the stack, but the real winners sell outcomes, not inputs**

The B2B ICT prize continues to grow beyond standalone connectivity. Global ICT spending has expanded at c.5.7% CAGR since 2023 and is expected to continue, exceeding US\$7tn by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Connectivity remains essential, but more value is moving to providers that combine it with managed services, clear service commitments and accountability for customer results.

Enterprise buying behaviour already shows this shift. The EY 2026 Reimagining Industry Futures study describes a market shaped by AI, 5G, edge computing, sovereign cloud and changing supplier expectations; its guidance emphasises business outcomes, consultative support and well-documented implementation cases. Buyers favour ICT providers that reduce complexity, simplify procurement and translate technical capabilities into clear business benefits. Key purchasing criteria are moving toward secure, outcome-led solutions with integrated service-level agreements, supported by vertical expertise, intuitive digital experiences and effective partner orchestration.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion is not that connectivity is becoming irrelevant, but that connectivity has become the substrate upon which outcomes and value are packaged, assured and monetised.

The growth of enterprise AI is also creating demand for secure compute, sovereign data environments and AI factories that bring together accelerated infrastructure, data platforms, connectivity and managed operations. For operators, this can open new infrastructure and service opportunities, although the attractiveness of participation will depend heavily on access to power, suitable sites, capital, technical capabilities and credible routes to utilisation.

Exhibit 1: Telco B2B ICT growth models by value-chain position

|                                   | Business Models                      | Addressable share of value chain | Evidence from market leaders                                                                                                         | Offering                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Trends                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Critical capabilities                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Scale of change |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>B2B2X Solution</b>             | Outcome-based                        | 15-25%*                          | ~12.5X growth<br>18.9% digital-solutions revenue growth at Telefónica Tech in 2025, vs 1.5% for Telefónica Group                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tailored end-to-end solutions for specific verticals or segments (e.g., SMB)</li> <li>Delivered -as-a-Service with SLAs</li> </ul>                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System integrators and professional services firms dominate</li> <li>SMB/Prosumer markets hold potential for telcos who move quickly</li> </ul>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deep vertical knowledge</li> <li>Professional services salesforce &amp; solutioning</li> <li>Rapid partner on-boarding and custom integration (SI)</li> </ul>                        | Peak            |
| <b>Platform</b>                   | XaaS                                 | 10-15%*                          | +8% MRR<br>Equinix's digital infrastructure platform enabled 8% MRR growth and a 49% adjusted EBITDA margin in FY25                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aggregated digital infra solutions (e.g., connectivity + edge)</li> <li>Pre-integrated with partner or own services e.g., analytics, security</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hyperscalers already dominate global reach and developer access</li> <li>Fragmented telco industry creates market for aggregators</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global/regional scale and reach</li> <li>Developer ecosystem</li> <li>Rapid partner on-boarding and scalable integration</li> <li>Deep tech expertise &amp; \$</li> </ul>            | Ridge           |
| <b>Connectivity-as-a-service</b>  | Digital Infrastructure-as-a-service  | 3-8%*                            | +10% ARR<br>Megaport (a scaled Network-as-a-Service provider) grew FY25 revenue 16% and ARR per customer 10% while growing EBITDA 9% | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elastic connectivity (on-demand, real-time)</li> <li>Technology agnostic (fixed, mobile, satellite)</li> <li>Other capabilities (CPE, billing, fieldforce, localization)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agility and experience = name of the game but requires asset-light operating model</li> <li>M&amp;A highly likely, balanced by growing sovereignty concerns</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Last-mile reach, local market knowledge and resources</li> <li>'Platform-ready' delivery of connectivity and value-added services -as-a-Service</li> </ul>                           | Base camp       |
| <b>NetCo</b>                      | Wireless and wireline infrastructure | 1-3%*                            | +2% margin<br>Helios Towers attribute +2% adj. EBITDA margin in FY25 to tenancy ratio expansion via scaling                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical infrastructure</li> <li>Core network service &amp; network orchestration</li> </ul>                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structural separation (capital release + cost efficiency)</li> <li>Continuous consolidation and joint-ventures likely</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical infrastructure and network proximity to user</li> <li>Local field force</li> <li>Shared/reusable infrastructure for maximum cost efficiency &amp; sustainability</li> </ul> |                 |
| <b>InfraCo</b>                    |                                      |                                  |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                 |
| <b>Traditional Integrated CSP</b> |                                      |                                  |                                                                                                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fixed/mobile services through retail and digital channels</li> </ul>                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hyper-competition with new challengers emerging</li> </ul>                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated business model spanning mobile, fixed and associated infrastructure</li> </ul>                                                                                            |                 |

Note: Potential shares of value chain based on current market trends and projections. Data sources: Telefónica and Telefónica Tech 2025 results; GSMA Open Gateway; Cellnex, American Tower and Helios Towers 2025 results; EY-Parthenon analysis

\* Addressable share of value chain based on EY analysis of value distribution (25% HW, 20% NEP, 5% Connectivity, 15% Apps/ SW, 35% P. svcs), and the potential share for Platform and E2E Telcos providing such services (10% of HW, 10% of NEP, 100% of Connectivity, 10% of Apps/ SW, and 30% of P. Svcs for E2E only)

Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

## 1.2

### For operators, a deliberate and measurable strategy is more essential than ever, as financial headwinds intensify and B2B ICT headroom remains under-exploited

This opportunity arrives as operators face tougher financial headwinds. In 2026, some operators face free cash flow pressure, with ROCE often close to or below WACC. For industry leaders, this mandates clear linkages between each growth proposition and a route to repeatable delivery, measurable commercial traction and a credible path to attractive unit economics.<sup>3</sup>

For many operators, the untapped opportunity remains

significant. Less advanced operators often derive less than 10% of revenues from B2B. This rises to 35%-40% in more favourable market contexts.<sup>4</sup> This is a structural indicator of under-participation in the broader B2B ICT spend pool.

Operators therefore need to choose where to compete, what to own, and how to deliver. They should avoid trying to play across the whole ICT value chain without the operating model to support it.

# TWO

## How to play: Choose a strategic participation model aligned to assets and capabilities

Operators win in B2B ICT by choosing an ownership boundary that aligns with their assets, capabilities and willingness to carry risk. The models described in this section are not a hierarchy – they each come with inherent trade-offs that suit some operators better than others.

Exhibit 2: Telco B2B ICT business models by value chain coverage

### Business model considerations

For Telcos to transform into B2B2X disruptors they need to ensure they **stitch together the right business models** for their operations. All building on their **customer base and data assets**, the choice of business model (or combination of models by geography/sector) should be made based on the (to-be-required) capabilities of the Telco and expected returns.

Some business models to consider are:

### Value chain coverage



#### A Connectivity owner and lead ecosystem partner

- Partner with solution providers, device manufacturers and professional service providers.
- Lead all customer touchpoints for solution delivery.
- Such a model could be particularly relevant with SMEs, local large enterprises and government entities where the operator has already **established strong relationships**, and **understands the specificities of the market**.

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

#### B Solution owner and lead ecosystem partner

- Develop a **specific expertise around a solution** set or an enterprise sector (e.g., Healthcare) and scale it to markets through partnerships – not only in geographies where the Telco runs its connectivity operations.
- Such a model could be best suited for **top tier operators that have developed niche industry specific** offerings and have built strong initial credentials in the markets where they operate.

✓ ✓ ✓

#### C Full value chain player

- In-house capabilities** and offerings to enable an end-to-end value proposition to customers.
- This model requires **deep expertise across the value chain** and **continuous investments** into innovation and R&D.

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

## 2.1

**Three strategic participation models define what the operator owns and how success is measured**

In practice, three stylised participation models define different ownership boundaries and different measures of success.

**A. Lean connectivity owner** – win by delivering dependable, programmable connectivity rather than owning outcomes.

**B. Vertical solution owner** – win by owning a defined, repeatable solution in a limited number of verticals. The operator controls the proposition, integrates a set of partner components and remains accountable for a specific solution outcome.

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Case study | Standardised network APIs make network capabilities easier for developers and enterprises to access across operators. GSMA states that Open Gateway is a global framework of common network APIs, while its API catalogue identifies mature capabilities including number verification, SIM swap, location verification and quality on demand. The commercial opportunity is to turn those capabilities into dependable products and embed them in customer or partner journeys |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Case study | A leading telecommunications company in ASEAN describes its unique system as an all-in-one platform for 5G network, edge computing, cloud and services orchestration. Its public materials highlight how enterprises can create network slices, deploy applications at multi-access edge compute and access partner applications through one platform. This illustrates how a provider can convert infrastructure into a more standardised, repeatable solution layer. |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

- This model fits operators with scaled infrastructure, a strong cost position, broad SMB/public-sector reach and a need for capital-disciplined growth.
- The strategic move is to expose network attributes such as latency, jitter, security and identity, as APIs; monetise resilience; and keep the catalogue lean and programmable.
- Success should be measured through service quality and partner adoption: Latency and jitter performance, coverage/reach, partner onboarding time and percentage of revenue from exposed APIs, aligned to open architectures and standardised operational models.

Orange Business publicly describes Orange Cyberdefense as its specialist cybersecurity business. They have also announced a dedicated defence and homeland-security division combining resilient connectivity, data hosting, AI and cybersecurity capabilities. These disclosures illustrate focused vertical and capability plays in line with the vertical solution owner model.

- This model is most effective when operators combine sector credibility, strong partners and reusable modules such as IoT, edge computing and security.
- The strategic method is to build strong digital infrastructure, adopt a solution-led approach, leverage as-a-service models and execute through ecosystem curation rather than bespoke application development.
- Practically, that means curating independent software vendors and system integrators through a marketplace, whilst retaining NaaS/IaaS and the SLA envelope, and letting partners own specialised application logic.
- Performance is best assessed through platform usage, industry revenue mix, managed-services share, marketplace orders, partner NPS and adoption of edge and API-enabled services.

**C. Ecosystem orchestrator** – win by coordinating a multi-provider ecosystem around an end-to-end customer outcome. The operator governs commercial rules, service integration, data exchange and SLA accountability across several partners, without owning every underlying product.

## Case study

Vodafone Business's publicly described building a standalone 5G mobile private network that use cases including predictive maintenance, video surveillance, sensorisation and drone inspection.

- This model works best in a narrow set of industries where operators or ICT providers can credibly coordinate end-to-end outcome delivery. It requires pricing based on SLA performance or business KPIs (e.g., uptime, latency, verified identity/location) rather than components.
- The same model may apply to AI factories and sovereign compute, where the operator coordinates connectivity, data-centre capacity, compute technology, cloud platforms, cybersecurity and managed operations without necessarily owning every layer of the stack.
- Measurement must focus on delivery, quality and profitability: time-to-SLA, SLA attainment, in-life margin, change-control acceptance and percentage of zero-touch fulfilment.
- Experience-based findings are clear: over-expansion dilutes ROI; right to win verticals, fixed data foundations, and disciplined orchestration materially improve outcomes.

Exhibit 3: B2B ICT ecosystem roles and participation requirements

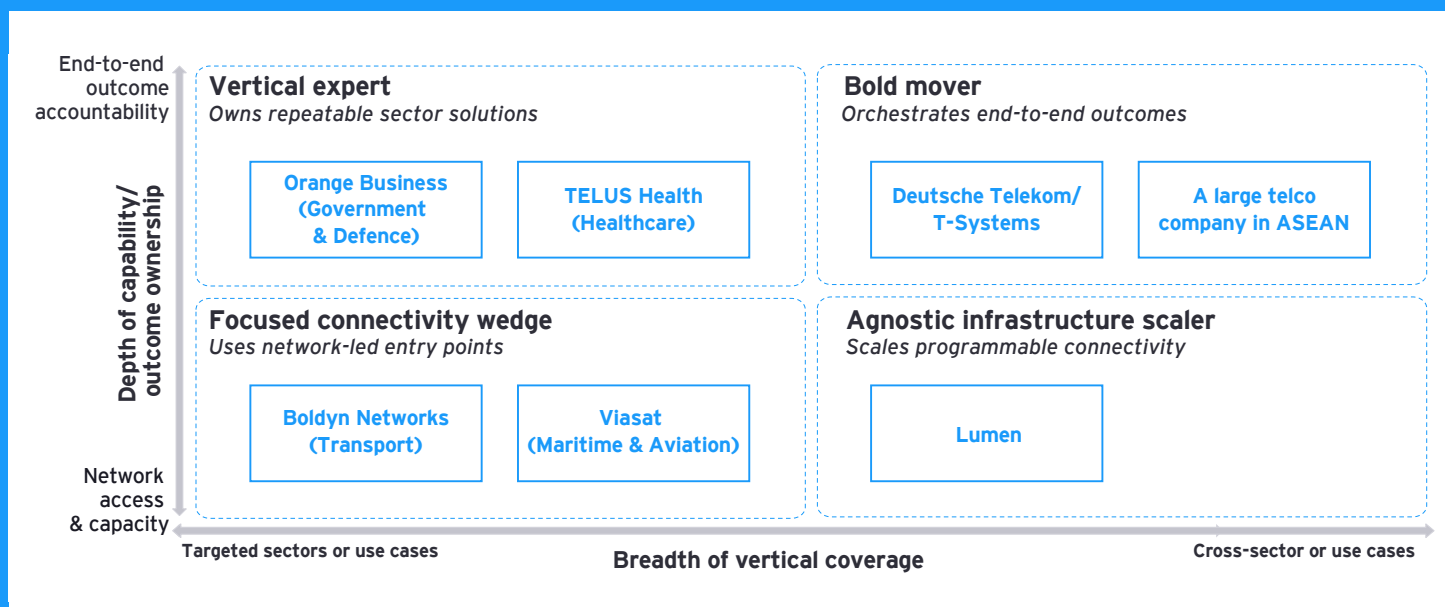
| PRE-REQUISITES  | As an organisation ...                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                            |                                                                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Capability      | I can <b>provide the technology and talent</b> required to create the ecosystem.                                                                                          | I can <b>provide complementary products and services to meet the demand</b> generated by the orchestrator. | I can <b>provide capabilities to facilitate operation</b> of the ecosystem.           |
| Customer access | I have a <b>large and broad customer base</b> .                                                                                                                           | I have a <b>relatively small or niche customer base</b> .                                                  | I typically <b>do not have customer-facing touchpoints</b> .                          |
| Risk appetite   | I am willing to <b>shoulder the upfront risk</b> in return for high reward.                                                                                               | I have a <b>relatively small risk appetite</b> , and looking to reduce my innovation cost.                 | I have a <b>small risk appetite</b> .                                                 |
| Brand position  | I have a <b>strong brand</b> and market position, with a significant share of voice.                                                                                      | I have a <b>brand purpose that aligns with the ecosystem mission</b> .                                     |                                                                                       |
| Other           | I have the expertise to define how the ecosystem is governed and monetised and <b>can provide sufficient incentive to other participants to invest in the ecosystem</b> . |                                                                                                            |                                                                                       |
|                 |                                                                                        |                         |  |
|                 | <b>I am the ORCHESTRATOR</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>I am the PARTNER</b>                                                                                    | <b>I am the ENABLER</b>                                                               |

Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

# THREE

## Where to play: Focus on verticals and use cases where the operator has a defensible right to win

Exhibit 4: Where to play: focus on verticals and use cases



Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

The “where to play” decision is about more than targeting industries with high ICT spend. It requires identifying sectors where a provider’s network capabilities and digital platforms materially shape business performance, giving the operator a defensible role in the customer solution. Breadth of coverage and depth of capabilities determine the sectors and use-cases that an operator should be targeting. Attractive demand without a credible right to win is not a strategy: operators should target sectors and use cases where their breadth of coverage and depth of capabilities give them a defensible role in the customer solution.

## 3.1

### Operators have a right to win where networks and digital platforms materially shape business outcomes

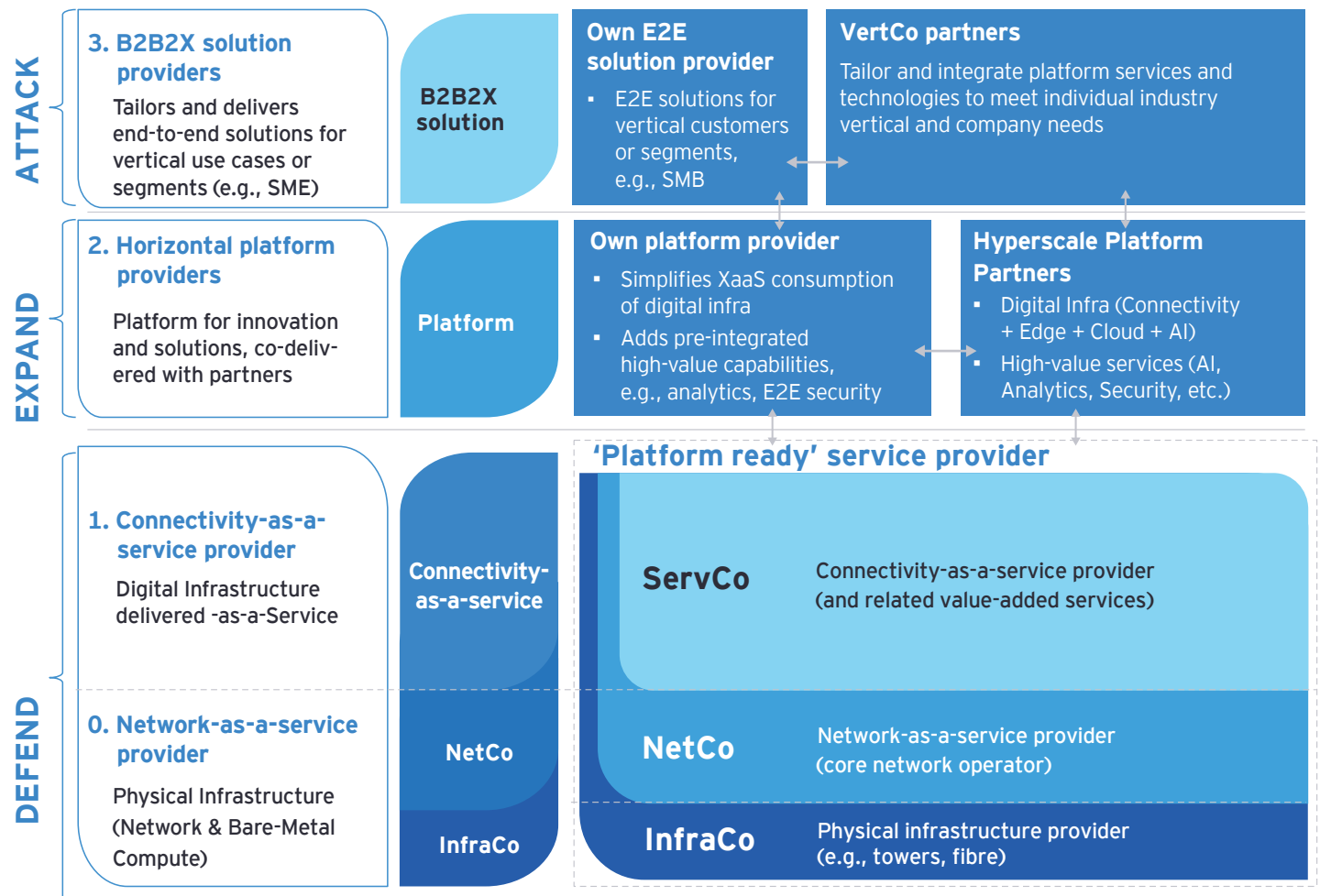
Providers that hold the SLA envelope, orchestrate partners, and expose identity, location, latency and assurance as API-based products capture a greater share of value.<sup>5</sup> As network APIs become standardised through GSMA Open Gateway and CAMARA, productising network attributes becomes a core monetisation pathway rather than a niche technical initiative.<sup>5</sup>

## 3.2

### Disciplined selection mechanics matter: Winners focus on a handful of sectors where they have true right to win

Sector focus is now an execution requirement. EY-Parthenon analysis indicates that operators and ICT providers grow faster when they focus on three to five verticals where infrastructure, brand and ecosystem position create a structural advantage.<sup>6</sup> A cross-sector capability domain can play a similar role where the same structural advantage exists.

Exhibit 5: Telco B2B ICT positioning by vertical focus and ownership depth



- Traditional CSPs need to **DEFEND** their core business, as they continue to be under pressure, this can be done through:
  - Putting an increasing emphasis on customer **experience**
  - Continuously refreshing offerings**, through innovation, to maintain state of the art connectivity
  - Continuing to improve **operational efficiencies and flexibility**
- Telcos can also tap into sizable revenue pools by **EXPANDING** towards:
  - Smart connectivity for consumers - e.g., **smart home market expected to amount to >USD 300 bn by 2026**
  - Infrastructure as-a-service -e.g., cloud computing market expected to grow to >USD 800 bn by 2025
  - Ultimately, the larger revenue potential lies in **ATTACKing** e.g., a share of wallet of the **USD 6.8 trillion of direct digital transformation investments** that are to be spent in the years 2020 to 2023 alone
  - As Telcos move away from their traditional CSP businesses and expand/ attack, **the way they create and capture value needs to also transform**

The EY 2026 *Reimagining Industry Futures* study further points towards a more selective sector strategy. In private networks, enterprises are leaning toward IT services providers, most visibly in manufacturing, while telcos remain strongest in financial services, government and healthcare, where secure infrastructure, compliance intensity and spectrum-driven delivery remain meaningful differentiators.<sup>7</sup>

- **Cybersecurity and digital trust:** An overarching cross-sector opportunity for operators to differentiate through network-integrated security, identity and managed services, underpinned by unified service accountability and SLAs.
- **Government and public sector:** High security, compliance and trust requirements favour telcos that combine assured infrastructure with credible operating models and strong partner ecosystems.
- **Healthcare:** Data control, cybersecurity expectations and continuity needs of critical services favour providers that combine secure connectivity with managed, outcome-led delivery.
- **Financial services:** Security-led procurement, regulatory scrutiny and ongoing telco relevance in private networks create a defensible 'right to win' when paired with delivery assurance.

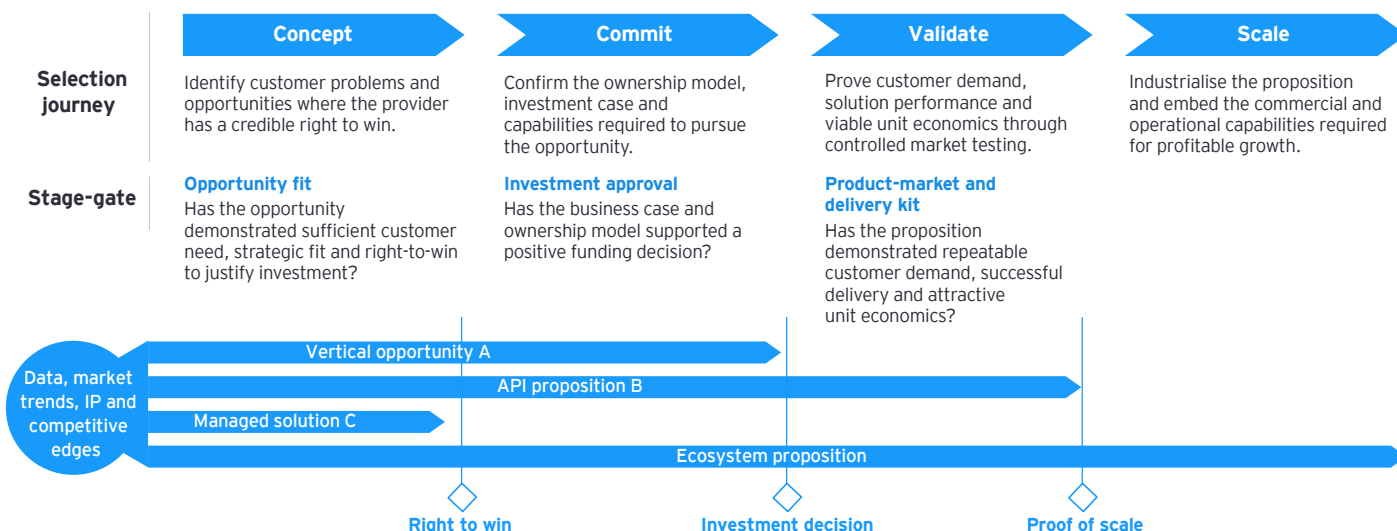
- **Automotive (selectively):** Network capabilities and APIs can enable supply chain, manufacturing and connected-vehicle outcomes, but success requires packaged solutions and ecosystem-led execution.
- **Energy, utilities and mining (selectively):** Asset-heavy operations, resilience needs and sovereignty/security pressures support demand for industrial-grade connectivity plus managed services where telcos can prove delivery at scale.
- **AI factories and sovereign compute (selectively):** Operators can combine connectivity, infrastructure and regulated-sector relationships, but should choose carefully between ownership, specialist partnerships and service orchestration given capital and technology risks.

This is where disciplined selection mechanics matter. EY's ETVenture's success stories show that structured feasibility-viability-desirability testing improves outcomes. Sectors with clear customer pain points, willingness to pay, scalable economics, and delivery strength with partners are far more likely to succeed.<sup>8</sup>

### Case study

A leading telecommunications company in ASEAN provided the 5G connectivity underpinning a mixed-reality healthcare solution developed in conjunction with a national digital agency, a technology provider and a specialist medical software company. Clinicians use high-resolution 3D images to plan complex procedures and guide selected surgeries, demonstrating how focused partnerships can translate network capabilities into defined customer outcomes.

Exhibit 6: B2B ICT opportunity development through the venture stage-gate process



Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

### 3.3

## Past lessons are clear: Own outcomes that matter, expose the network where it is separable, and minimise bespoke software

The pattern from past B2B ICT waves is consistent. Operators create value where network capabilities are tightly linked to business outcomes and the operator retains control of the customer proposition, service integration and SLA, while partners provide specialised application capabilities. Conversely, operators typically lose margin when they overbuild applications or spread too thinly across industries.<sup>9</sup>

The strategic implication is a deliberate dual-track approach:

1. Where the application layer is separable, the winning move is to expose NaaS/IaaS/APIs with a strong developer experience and partner for specialised application logic.<sup>9</sup>
2. Where outcomes fundamentally depend on connectivity, providers should own vertical modules and SLA-backed assurance.

Where security value depends on network insight, identity or continuous assurance, operators should integrate cybersecurity into the proposition and SLA rather than treating it as an unrelated product adjacency.

**The focus is not to build more software but to own what is necessary to price and deliver outcomes, while partnering for everything else.**

# FOUR

## How to execute: Use targeted B2B ICT growth to build the future operating model

Choosing a model and a set of priority opportunities is only the starting point. Value is created when those choices are turned into repeatable propositions that can be sold, delivered and renewed profitably; this is precisely where many B2B ICT strategies stall. Fragmented ownership, complex portfolios, bespoke delivery and weak handovers between sales and operations each contribute to slower execution, increased cost and margin erosion.

The capabilities needed to scale outcome-led solutions, including modular products, vertical expertise, partner orchestration, commercial discipline and automated service delivery, are also foundations of the future telco operating model.

### 4.1

#### **Combine shared scale with focused vertical execution**

Network, data, security, product platforms, service orchestration and assurance should remain shared capabilities. Around this core, operators should build focused segment or vertical teams with authority over proposition, sales, solution architecture, partnerships and delivery readiness.

Where legacy governance constrains speed, operators should be prepared to innovate at the edges through specialist businesses or semi-autonomous units with clear accountability. The aim is not structural separation – it is speed without duplicating the assets that give the operator its advantage.

Accountability must extend beyond revenue. Leaders need to understand whether each vertical is generating qualified pipeline, improving win rates, increasing the reuse of common solutions and delivering attractive in-life margins. Key metrics must reflect the chosen participation model; a connectivity owner and an ecosystem orchestrator should not be judged using the same scorecard.

## 4.2

### Build one commercial engine, differentiated by customer need

The commercial engine is the mechanism that converts vertical choices into growth. It should translate priority customer problems into targeted campaigns, repeatable propositions, appropriate sales motions and contracts that can be delivered profitably.

Customer experience should still vary by segment. Large enterprises may require solution co-design and vertical expertise, while smaller businesses increasingly expect simple digital journeys, transparent propositions and rapid fulfilment.

Beneath these differentiated experiences, operators need a joined-up commercial engine connecting customer insight, proposition development, demand generation, sales, pricing, deal governance, delivery and renewal. EY's *Future of Sales* point of view provides a framework for modernising customer engagement and commercial execution through simpler journeys, real-time product and pricing decisions, stronger cross-functional collaboration and better partner orchestration. For operators, these principles can help translate vertical priorities into repeatable propositions and profitable growth.<sup>11</sup>

AI and automation should support this model rather than define it. Applications such as account prioritisation, guided selling, proposal creation, pricing support and contract monitoring can improve decisions and reduce avoidable effort. Performance management should extend beyond bookings to conversion, sales-cycle time, cost-to-sell, attach rate, in-life margin, service performance, renewal and customer lifetime value. Complex deals should only progress where there is a credible route to delivering the promised outcome profitably.

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The EY ETVenture corporate venturing experience supports the same conclusion: new digital businesses scale faster with semi-autonomous structures, clear governance and independent commercial levers, mirroring the ServeCo/ B2B2X designs emerging among operators.<sup>10</sup>

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## 4.3

### Industrialise delivery through a common solution and service factory

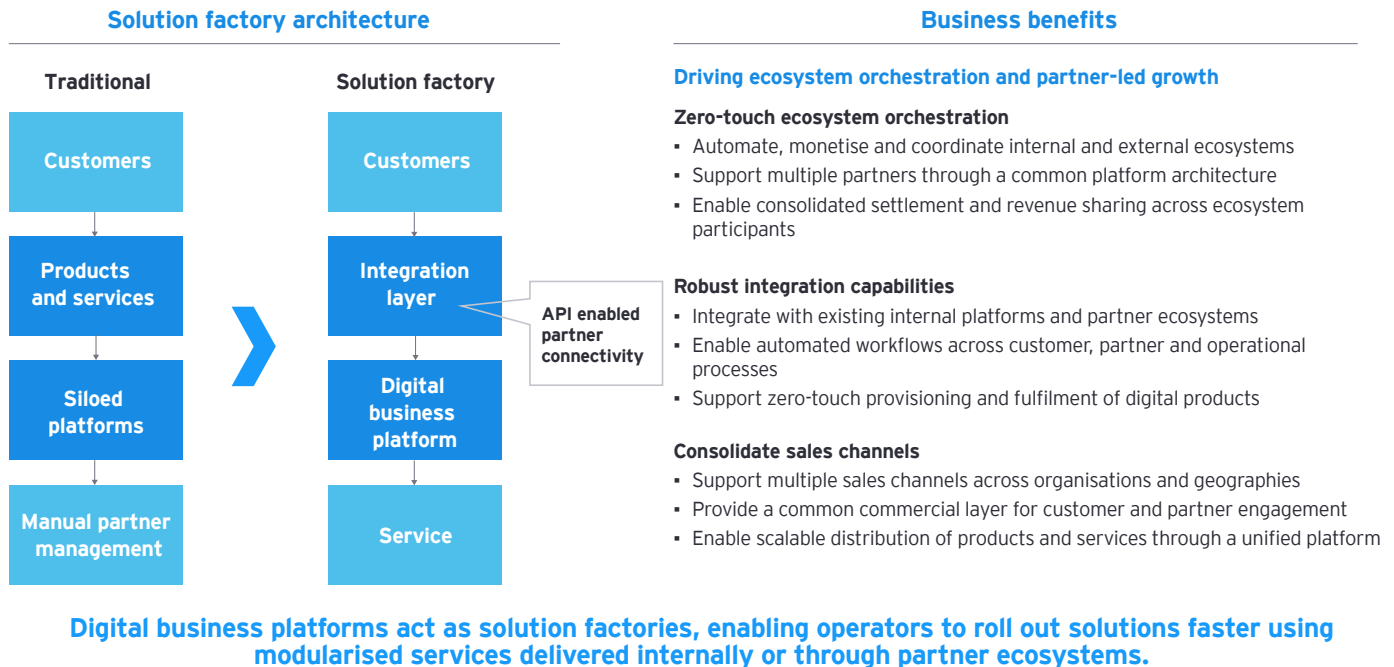
A stronger commercial engine will not create sustainable value if every sale requires a bespoke delivery model. Operators need a common solution and service factory that converts propositions into repeatable delivery.

Reusable components across connectivity, cloud, security, devices and managed services should be assembled into repeatable customer solutions. Partners should be managed through common commercial, technical and service-management standards. This allows the operator to own the customer relationship and SLA without developing every element itself.

The same discipline must apply across fulfilment and service. Product catalogue, inventory, ordering, provisioning, billing, partner management and assurance should operate as a connected lifecycle. Customer commitments, delivery responsibilities and SLAs should flow from the commercial proposition into operations without manual translation at each handover.

Automation can remove routine work, accelerate fulfilment and surface service or margin risks earlier. The ambition should be zero-touch where appropriate, not the elimination of human judgement. People should shift from repetitive processing to customer engagement, solution design, exception management and outcome assurance.<sup>12</sup>

Exhibit 7: B2B ICT solution factory architecture and business benefits



Source: EY-Parthenon research and analysis

## 4.4

### Deliver targeted B2B growth in conjunction with broader transformation

Operators should not wait for a complete future-state transformation before acting. Each targeted B2B growth initiative should deliver revenue and build reusable operating capability.

Agentic AI can take operators beyond narrowly-focused automation by coordinating activity across sales, solution design, fulfilment and service assurance. Realising this opportunity will require shared data foundations, clear accountability and robust security and compliance controls. Over time, this could support an AI-native operating model in which routine execution is increasingly automated, allowing people to focus on customer relationships, complex decisions and exception management.

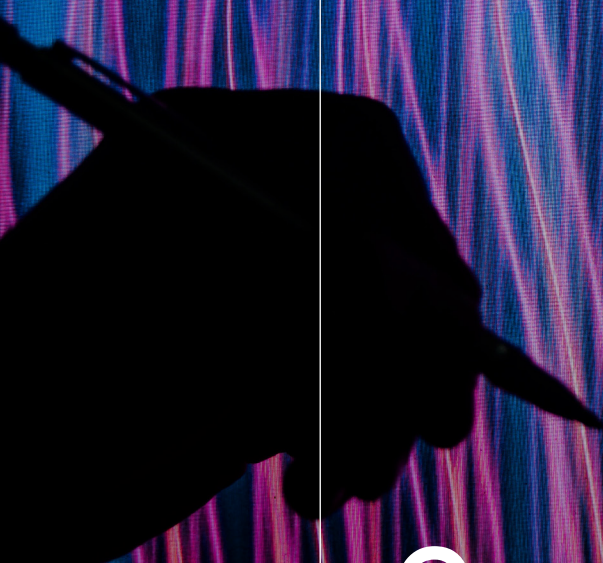
A vertical proposition can generate revenue while simplifying the catalogue. A digital sales journey can improve conversion while establishing a common customer-data foundation. An SLA-backed service can increase value while strengthening orchestration and assurance. The initiatives that matter most are those that do two things at once: they address a near-term customer and growth opportunity, and they leave behind reusable products, processes, data and partner models that the wider business can scale.



# Final takeaways for telecom executives

The central message is straightforward. Targeted B2B ICT growth and broader operating-model transformation should be managed in conjunction. The operators that win will not pursue growth by adding complexity. They will use focused B2B growth to simplify the business, prove the future operating model and scale what works.

| 1                                                                                           | 2                                                                                                                                                                 | 3                                                                                                                                          | 4                                                                                                                                      | 5                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Choose clearly                                                                              | Own the control points                                                                                                                                            | Prove before scaling                                                                                                                       | Industrialise delivery                                                                                                                 | Transform through growth                                                                                                      |
| Confirm the participation model, priority verticals and capabilities the operator will own. | Retain ownership of the customer proposition, service accountability and commercial governance where these remain important sources of differentiation and value. | Set clear thresholds for customer demand, delivery performance, repeatability and unit economics before committing significant investment. | Standardise products, partner models and end-to-end delivery processes to improve scalability, consistency and operational efficiency. | Use targeted B2B growth initiatives to accelerate the transition to a leaner, more automated and data-driven operating model. |



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