

## GUEST AUTHOR

# Delivering a Superior Product through Collaboration



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**W**ith today's rapidly changing broadband landscape, success is best assured when equipment vendors and service providers collaborate in the product development process. By involving customers in creating a product, vendors can unlock a range of benefits that contributes to the best outcome as well as a stronger relationship between the two companies. A recent example of this development model is the LiNC product created by Amphenol.

To be successful, collaboration must include open communication, mutual trust, and a shared vision of the desired outcome. As a vendor, we looked to gain a comprehensive understanding of the service provider's needs, goals, and technical specifications. The provider's "champion" provided insight based on his network expertise as well as operational requirements.

Both parties worked together using an iterative process to define the product's scope, features, and functionality. Our technical capabilities and experience in product development were complemented by the champion's deep understanding of the unique challenges and goals of the service provider. Initial design and prototyping were followed by testing, with the team refining the product along the way, ensuring it meets expectations and aligns with engineering and operational requirements.

As the new LiNC product is successfully released for general use within the service provider market, there are several key takeaways from this approach to product development.

- **Streamlined Deployment:** The processes within a service provider to secure and deploy new technology can be quite complex, and unique to a given geographical area or network topology. Collaborative efforts of the joint product team ensured a smoother integration within these as well as other unique complexities.
  - **Innovation Speed:** By tapping into the champion's unique expertise, our product developers were better able to use their own design and manufacturing knowledge to introduce new concepts and features, advancing innovation beyond what might have come were the product developed without customer involvement. Of course, this has catapulted the product ahead of possible competitive solutions, while also allowing the customer to benefit from the innovations sooner.
  - **Customer Satisfaction:** Naturally, the champion has an "ownership" of the product beyond a simple customer-supplier relationship. Others in his company interpreted his active participation as an invitation to provide their own direct input as well, further advancing the goals of both companies. The resulting satisfaction as well as a sense of ownership will likely serve well to promote more long-term collaboration moving forward.
- Our collaborative partnership with a knowledgeable customer champion has brought numerous benefits along with the delivery of a new network product. These include driving innovation, enhancing user satisfaction, and streamlining deployment. By leveraging the insights of the champion, we have created a product also relevant to the customer's network, more fully meeting the unique needs of this service provider and positioning the product to be marketed to additional network owners. This collaboration led to a superior product while simultaneously strengthening the relationship between the companies.
- **Product Relevance:** The product is extremely relevant when matched against the specific pain points and needs expressed by the champion. Attention to these details resulted in a product more closely aligned with their unique requirements while also assuring that it fits in with the service provider's existing infrastructure. While the product is viewed as a custom fit for a specific customer, the similarity between the broadband fiber infrastructures of all service providers makes it a solution that may be deployed industry wide.