

# Preparing for WLR3

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## Introduction

Under the Telecommunications Strategic Review OFCOM stipulated that BT Retail and third party Communication Providers (CPs) should use the same mechanisms to access the Openreach network, to ensure 'equivalence of input'. The Wholesale Line Rental 3 (WLR3) standard specifies how CPs should interact with Openreach in future to purchase access products and resell them to their own clients. The standard has been established to ensure that all CPs have equivalent access to the network and in particular equivalence with BT Retail.

Openreach has implemented a new system known as the Equivalence Management Platform (EMP). CPs will access the EMP to purchase WLR3 which will, in time, replace the WLR2 gateway previously provided by BT Wholesale.

Unlike WLR2, WLR3 does not have a standard web portal provided by Openreach to allow CPs to place orders. Instead, CPs will need to either develop their own gateway or partner with a solution provider.

## Who is affected?

All customers of the Wholesale Line Rental portfolio (also known as Wholesale Access, Wholesale Digital Access and Wholesale ISDN30™) will be affected, including all CPs as well as BT Retail and BT Global Services. Openreach are providing CPs with greater control over their order management by providing flexible "Dialogue" services to check availability, appointment schedules and order status, but Openreach customers will have to re-design their own processes to interact with these new services. Existing users of WLR2 will have a grace period to continue using the current protocol, but migration to the new standard will be encouraged over time.

## What are the benefits of WLR3?

WLR3 was introduced to enable CPs to compete more effectively and provide better service to their customers. The new protocol significantly improves the speed, accuracy and ease of placing orders for access products. CPs are also given full control of the order process, including the ability to log faults and obtain order status in real-time. The new EMP for WLR3 is a 24 hour high-volume platform with no requirement for CPs to forecast.

Some of the benefits offered by WLR3 in more detail include:

- **Faster orders:** WLR3 orders (new provide, transfer, amendment, etc.) are placed immediately rather than

entering a queue as per WLR2. This reduces order processing costs for the CP

- **Fewer rejected orders:** Address matching and full CLI validation can be carried out prior to order submission, ensuring less orders are rejected, again reducing costs for the CP
- **Enhanced number reservation:** WLR3 provides instant access to a list of available telephone numbers per BT exchange. Customer service representatives can view and reserve numbers during a client call
- **Faster Appointment Scheduling:** CPs have access to the Openreach appointment diary. The WLR3 system will allow the CP to view and reserve preferred service provision dates while a customer is on the call
- **Better customer information Keeping Customers Informed (KCI):** When an order is placed, the EMP will regularly send messages back to the CP updating them on the order status
- **Better Visibility of Compensation SLA breaches:** CPs can now see exactly how much time is spent on orders and trouble tickets and make corresponding compensation claims when SLAs are not met by Openreach
- **Better testing and fault reporting:** WLR3 enables the CP to conduct a line test and immediately obtain the result; CPs will be able to log a fault (Request Trouble Report) and instantly add or modify a temporary call divert if required

## What do you need to do to access WLR3?

There are four basic components required to use WLR3:

- Connectivity (to the EMP)
- Process (to manage the WLR3 interactions)
- User interfaces
- Integration (to existing back office systems)

**Connectivity** is not a huge technical issue - CPs can build their own or source a third party product. Since connectivity will be common to many CPs there is not a lot of scope for differentiation. The process layer, the interface and the integration to existing systems are where CPs will want to focus their effort.

The **Process** component specifies which WLR3 facilities and Dialogue Services the CP wants to use and how they want to interact with Openreach. Because the WLR3 protocol is based on ebXML, we believe that a business

process management (BPM) approach is particularly suitable for implementing this component. At a generic level, ebXML describes how collaborative business processes that flow between business partners can be implemented through the exchange of XML-based messages. WLR3 uses ebXML to describe the specific process interactions possible between CPs and Openreach. Business process management solutions take these definitions, model them graphically as end-to-end processes and then automate the models, driving work to the right people and systems at the right time. An example would be the "PrepareTransfer" process - the process component should ensure that an incoming order (Transfer) complies with the WLR3 specification, that the correct data is provided and that the order is well formed, and it should then manage the submission to Openreach and subsequent interactions related to that order. Modelling these processes using BPM ensures that it is easy to migrate to newer versions of the standard, since changes only have to be applied to the model, not to underlying applications.

**User interfaces** can be bought, built or reused from existing systems. However they are provided, the interfaces will have to be modified specifically to let CP staff make full use of new features such as KCI. Beyond simple order-entry, there are a range of other interfaces to consider, particularly management information and graphical dashboards that provide an end-to-end view of order processing and overall performance. A solution that can highlight exceptions graphically and generate alerts will further reduce cycle times and overall costs.

Lastly, **integration** to the CP's existing systems is going to be crucial to fully exploit the potential of WLR3. The information made available by Openreach should be fed to key systems to enhance billing, fault management and SLA management. The ease of integration will depend on the approach and technology chosen - from generic integration adaptors to bespoke point integrations.

### **Implementation Advice**

The steps required to implement a WLR3 Programme are similar to those for any project - identify the actions that have to be taken, estimate the effort required for those actions, specify what resources are required, sequence the activities in order of priority and set target dates and deliverables for each of the activities. As part of the project initiation, CPs should prepare a business case that identifies the costs and projected benefits of adopting WLR3. We also recommend a short risk analysis to identify business, technical and project risks and agree how these risks are to be managed.

Project planning requires developing a clear understanding of how interacting with WLR3 will affect your existing IT infrastructure and business processes. CPs will need to develop B2B business interfaces to inter-operate with the BT Openreach systems based on the ebXML internet protocols. The new Openreach

processes hand control of ordering back to the CP using a set of flexible "Dialogue" services to check availability, schedule appointments and order services. To fully exploit the potential of these new services requires that CPs re-evaluate and re-design their end-to-end processes.

Selecting a solution partner who has a strong track record of delivering successful projects, together with good project management skills, will ensure the CP quickly obtains real and measurable business benefits from the adoption of WLR3.

### **About the Author**

Dr. Robert McGarry is Director of Singularity Telco, the Telecommunications unit of Singularity. Prior to joining Singularity in 2000, Dr. McGarry spent over a decade working with British Telecom.