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Foundations 2009: Voice Self-Service Meets Web 2.0

Phone-based self-service has taken on new meaning as phones morph into multi-functional wireless devices and contact center functions are distributed throughout the globe. Conversational Access Technologies now involve asynchronous interaction among individuals using Web services over the phone lines. Adding the human touch to traditionally automated self-service activities gives companies the option to leverage existing staff and IT infrastructure or rationally outsource operations to managed or hosted service providers.

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Key Findings:

This will be the final forecast for Conversational Access Technologies. Economic circumstances and architectural changes have changed the ecosystem forever, in the following ways:

- **Customer care is taking on a Web 2.0 flavor** – Changes take place at the speed of a Web site; interaction takes place between people over multiple channels in multiple formats.

- **"Conversational access" crosses space, time and channel** – IP-telephony and Web standards have forever changed enterprise spending on customer care.

- **Self-service has added a social layer** – Human intervention in self-service callflows and workflows is now the norm.

- **Enterprise spending patterns have shifted** – Companies spend on professional services and support to extend the life of existing infrastructure while fulfilling new sets of requirements.

- **IBM's licensing of source code to Nuance signals the end of an era** – Big Blue ran the numbers and determined that it was time to accept upfront money, rather than make further investment in solution development.

- **Development environments support disaggregation** – The "creative destruction" of existing solutions is made possible by refinements to the sets of development tools and dashboards to support new members of the Web 2.0 developer community.

- **Platforms learn to thrive survive "in the cloud"** – To extend self-service and assisted service to telephones, speech processing and call processing has learned to talk to cloud computing resources like Amazon's EC2, Salesforce.com's ServiceCloud and Voxeo.

- **Enterprises attach a greater premium to professional services** – Spending on application development, maintenance and refinements shows double digit growth during the forecast period.

- **Customer satisfaction takes precedent over automation rates** – After many years of lip service, major companies are paying attention to their caller experience and linking satisfaction to process automation and investment plans.

- **The economic downturn acts as an innovation accelerant** – Enterprises in all business verticals look for better ways to carry out their business and reach their customers.