opusresearch

Aura: Avaya's New Architecture for Multimodal Self-Service and Routing

A Conversational Access Technologies Advisory
July 9, 2009

Dan Miller
Sr. Analyst

Disparate modes call for disparate measures. Avaya's new unified communications architecture, Aura, supports self-service (based on the Voice Portal) and intelligent routing over IP and hybrid networks. Cross-channel interactions are coordinated by a new "Session Manager" function.

Aura Merges UC, Contact Centers and Self-Service

Contact centers around the world share a common manifest destiny. They are the transactional vortex of "collaborative self-service." To an increasing degree, purchase decisions and calls for technical support are the culmination of a process that begins with online search and consultation that could involve instant messaging, text messaging, Web browsing, chat and perusal of a plethora of blogs and micro-blogs.

Of necessity, incumbent communications infrastructure providers have to accommodate the many ways that customer care and technical support are carried out these days. For Avaya, the Aura™ architecture is the solution. Its design objectives are deceptively simple and, at the same time, very ambitious: to bring together applications and systems from multiple vendors and deliver results across multiple media, modes and networks.

Aura's design objectives are deceptively simple and, at the same time, very ambitious.

Marketing Starts With Improved ROI

Avaya's overall marketing message for Aura is grounded in cost-savings and ROI. Even though it introduces a new layer for SIP-based "session management," the overall purpose is simplification of multimedia communications. The new approach "decouples" applications and their attendant resources from the communications network employed.

This level of independence allows enterprises to migrate to SIP organically, on an "as needed" or more accurately "as justified" basis. This is a blatant appeal to the financial managers in an era of downsizing. The clear benefits for Avaya are to extend the life-expectancy and expand the capabilities of its flagship platforms, including the core Communications Manager and Voice Portal.

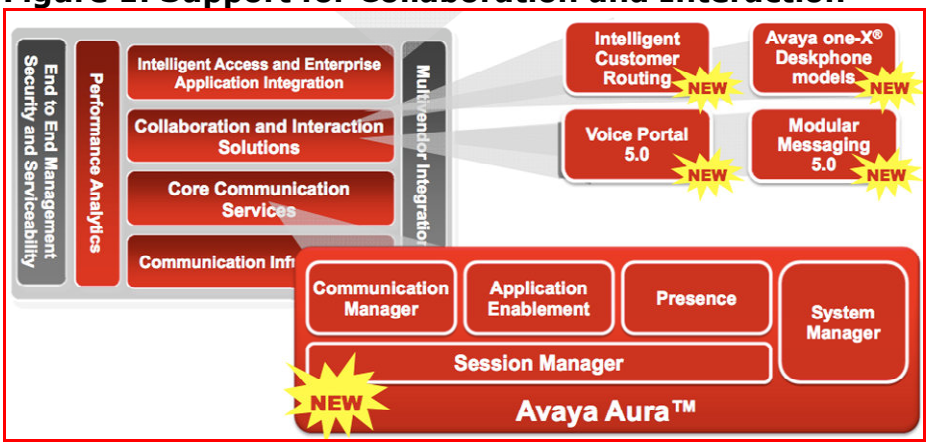
The Collaborative Customer Care Angle

Avaya began paving the road to Aura last year. One of the first examples was Proactive Outreach 1.0 (launched in November 2008). It was set of "prepackaged" capabilities for finance- and healthcare-oriented companies that showed how to leverage the Avaya Voice Portal platform and Proactive Contact applications. Avaya quickly followed with an update to the Interactive Response (IR) platform which added support of VoiceXML and modern "script-based" application studios as a bridge from IR to the more robust and scalable Voice Portal platform.

In March 2009, the Aura-friendly self-service architecture took on bolder definition with the introduction of Intelligent

Customer Routing along with new versions of Avaya Dialog Designer (5.0) and Avaya Voice Portal (5.0). Together they paved the way for SIP-supported transition from a voice application platform to a self-service system that can circumnavigate existing ACDs or PBXs and allow customers and agents communicate using text, voice or video.

Figure 1: Support for Collaboration and Interaction



Source: Avaya (March 2009)

Thanks to refinements in the Voice Portal and the introduction of Intelligent Customer Routing, Aura's architecture lets companies put the resources that govern treatment and routing of customer care into their own "private cloud." As Figure 1 illustrates, Avaya Aura is foundational to the multimodal customer care process. It sits in a box called "Core Communications Services" where the "Session Manager" orchestrates interactions that involve and the Communications Manager for routing informed by Application Enablement Resources and Presence Awareness.

A big part of the story is placing the Voice Portal in front of the call routing resources and using tighter integration of Avaya's CPM (Communications Process Manager) and Avaya IQ (analytics and reporting) to monitor and continuously tune both voice applications and call treatment.

Exploiting the Flat Earth

The new SIP-based environment exploits "the death of distance" for both call distribution and application management throughout a business enterprise. It could encompass call center agents, wherever they are; executives in offices, cubicles or branch offices; IVR systems; and Web sites, with the deceptively named "Voice Portal" serving as a media server for all media types.

The new SIP-based environment exploits "the death of distance" for both call distribution and application management throughout a business enterprise.

The power of this approach for Avaya's enterprise customers and prospects is that it will help them start to minimize the cost associated with ACD-based licenses and routing. For example, Genesys' intelligent Customer Front Door (iCFD) and Cross Channel Conversations initiatives represent how that firm's platform can rapidly recognize and handle customer care tasks regardless of the point of ingress and purpose of the call.

ICR: The End of Take-Back and Transfer

Leveraging SIP and placing the Voice Portal and ICR "in front of" a company's ACD results in significant cost savings. In addition to the ACD licenses mentioned above, the new system can avoid the transaction-driven "transfer/connect" charges that many carriers exact from geographically disperse enterprise customers.

More importantly, the use of SIP will allow for selective call treatment (caller segmentation) across several applications and locations. Companies can use their existing CTI infrastructure to insert calling party data as part of the SIP header. Thus you will see the integration of SIP with third-party desktops, resulting in less spending on training as companies migrate to the new platform.

The use of SIP will allow for selective call treatment (caller segmen-tation) across several applications and locations.

Finally: Multimodal Monitoring and Reporting

The new architecture supports more granular monitoring, reporting, administration and tuning of multimodal applications and call flows. The ICR is, in effect, a centralized resource for managing diverse resources across multiple media and geographic locations. Using a Web services model, this lays the foundation for high levels of flexibility in terms of monitoring, tuning or changing applications across the enterprise (based on roles and entitlements, of course).

Aura helps enterprise customers offer a wider breadth of services while extending the life expectancy of existing infrastructure elements, including Avaya ACDs and IVRs.