IP and UC Spell New Hosted and Managed Solutions

A Conversational Access Technologies Advisory
August 15, 2007

Dan Miller
Senior Analyst

On Tuesday, August 21, Opus Research has organized a day's worth of panel discussions called "The Year of Living Virtually," as part of SpeechTEK in New York City. Under discussion will be the creative ways that service providers meld IP-telephony and unified communications (UC) to change the nature of contact center outsourcing from its past focus on distributed voice processing applications to promote enhanced call routing that provides on-demand access to agents, voice platforms and Internet-based applications and resources.

Combining SIP, VoIP, VoiceXML and CRM for MBEs

The above headline earns the award for most TLAs (three-letter abbreviations) in an eight-word headline. It's designed to capture, in brief, the chief factors shaping the competitive environment for managed or hosted services. Self-service platform vendors have invested heavily in development of products that leverage IP-based telephony (hence the revenues to SIP and VoIP), along with Web services (scripted in VoiceXML) with strong links to the business logic that drives better customer service (CRM).

Next week, Opus Research has organized a series of panel discussions as part of the SpeechTEK Conference in New York. Entitled "The Year of Living Virtually," we'll be engaging leading service providers and their clients to share experience, roadmaps and vision for using outsourced services to ease the transition to new services and architectures.

Starting With an Inside Job

The managed services track at SpeechTEK will start with the real-world experience of CSX Transportation. This large freight handling company turned to long-time speech platform and hosted services provider, Intervoice, to manage its voice service platform for both freight management and crew management applications.

Our invitation for implementers to take the podium is designed to expose major industry trends. Firms of all sizes, and in all verticals, closely link call processing and voice processing to their core business objectives. Many also recognize that they have no intention to become call processing experts; they turn to outsourcers and managed service providers so that they can concentrate on their core competencies.

Contrasting Approaches

From the customer session, we will segue into a discussion among four firms that are helping define the new shape of managed services: Voxeo, Genesys Labs, First Data Voice Services and Verizon Business. Voxeo and Genesys provide core platforms for call processing, voice processing and attendant applications. First Data and Verizon are, more accurately, hosted or managed services providers. Collectively, they will help describe and define different

Firms of all sizes, and in all verticals, closely link call processing and voice processing to their core business objectives.

opusresearch

deployment options for both premises-based and on-demand services.

Genesys has shown success of late while expanding its network of managed services partners. Both First Data and Verizon Business deploy the Genesys Voice Platform (GVP) and elements of its core Customer Interaction Manager (CIM) software on behalf of their clients, along with other proprietary and non-proprietary resources. Still, a recent announcement by XO Interactive (the managed services subsidiary of XO Communications) exemplifies the direction that the managed services industry is going.

XO Interactive teams with Genesys and CRM specialist RightNow Technologies to give firms of all sizes on-demand access to contact center capabilities. RightNow, like its prime competitor Saleforce.com, has made its living by providing access to CRM data and capabilities through the Internet. By teaming with Genesys and XO Interactive, it now offers a solution set that tightly integrates agent desktops with voice response resources and call routing resources, which can be located anywhere. They all become part of a virtual contact center.

Meeting More Complex Business Goals

Approaches that transcend time zones and firewalls call for tighter integration with business logic and workflows. In a the session "Meeting Business Challenges," spokespeople from Envox, Tuvox, MTI (Message Technologies) and Angel.com will expose the multiplicity of ways that hosted and managed service providers lighten the burden (in terms of capital investment and in-house staff) of offering high quality phone-based and multimodal communications and customer care.

Each of these companies has been in the headlines recently with news of solutions that address many of the known challenges in the hosted and managed services milieu. Envox, for instance, announced its partnership with VoltDelta for offering carrier hardened contact center applications on demand. Tuvox, like Voxeo, is finding that it pays to pursue an architecture that allows for applications and resources to run on-premises or in-network. Through partnerships and directly, Tuvox has gone live with some very interesting interactive applications in support of American Airlines, Apple (iPhone) and others.

B teaming with Genesys and XO Interactive, RightNow Technologies offers a solution set … which can be located anywhere. They all become part of a virtual contact center.

Tuvox is also a long-standing partner of MTI, making it one of the first VoiceXML application development specialists to team up with a hosted service provider to provide a lower-cost and speedier entry point for businesses to offer speech enabled self-service and call routing. With experience dating back to 1999, Angel.com will provide insights based not just on years but on a customer roster that now exceeds 1,600 and spans multiple industries.

It's a Flat World After All

As a tacit tribute to Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, the day will finish with an international group discussing the global future of hosted and managed speech and call processing services. Friedman calls low-cost computing resources and capacious, free communications networks "the great flatteners." He means that they extend the promise of the Internet to broad audiences around the world.

Hosted and managed service providers play the important role of making the Web's most promising e-commerce, customer care and mobile applications even more accessible. Executives from Australia's Holly Connects and Spain's Ydilo join visionaries from Nuance and Gold Systems to showcase the global potential that's unleashed when multi-tenant platforms make it possible to transcend physical borders and break down the silos that customarily exist between customer care and service delivery. At the same time, we'll observe how sharing core infrastructure is making highly personalized services – which had been the hallmark of exclusive, high-end implementations – available to anyone with a phone or voice connection to the Internet.

opusresearch