

Assessing the Opportunity for Communication-Enabled Business Solutions: Five Key Considerations

Integrate communications with enterprise applications to drive new business value

It used to be that real-time business communication was synonymous with the telephone on your desk — but that paradigm has changed in two fundamental ways.

Now, real-time communication within the enterprise is multi-modal. Users not only have access to voice but also mobile text messaging, instant messaging, presence, video, document and application sharing across many types of mobile and desktop computing devices. As a result, companies must look at their communications systems in an entirely new way — a unified whole rather than a set of separate devices, components and applications.

Secondly, communications is no longer just a necessary expenditure to support day-to-day business activities. It has become an integral part of an enterprise’s overall strategy and is expected to drive improved productivity and competitiveness. Unified communications (UC) is helping to enable this transition by transforming how individuals and teams collaborate. A new approach is emerging, however, that extrapolates UC capabilities beyond the end user. This trend is called communications-enabled business processes (CEBP) and involves the direct integration of communication systems with business applications or processes to create new value across the enterprise. CEBP transcends personal productivity benefits by removing the human latency factor from business processes. It connects the right people in the right location from within the business applications they use every day in order to accelerate collaboration and decision-making.

CEBP is a game changer. It is about creating a competitive edge by structuring communications around the business process, rather than communications functions remaining isolated and purely user-driven. The result can mean a significant improvement in enterprise efficiency, cost reduction and competitive advantage.

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Section 1: Find the Sweet Spots

Is CEBP of potential value to everyone within your organization? Avaya's comprehensive internal study of CEBP has confirmed for us that the answer to that question is "yes". But what we have also learned is that the benefits are different and need to be articulated differently depending on where within the organization the concept of CEBP is introduced.

When we look at the specific practical business values of embedding CEBP into applications and processes, we see that while it is easier to measure the tangible benefits of improved communications as we move from the top of the organizational ladder down, the potential benefits are greatest at the top.

At the management level, although direct savings gained through CEBP may not always be monumental, they are certainly to be found and tend to be easier to justify. For example, an application that integrates communications with an enterprise's network health monitoring system can help reduce business downtime costs. When a critical network event occurs, the application accelerates responsiveness by automatically notifying technical support staff and setting up a conference call.

Moving up the ladder, let's suppose the CIO is considering an application that offers an improvement in productivity. Perhaps it delivers only small incremental benefits to individuals. It may not be worthwhile to act on CEBP for a small workgroup of only a few dozen workers. But, if applied to the entire workforce, there could be significant implications. For example, integrating click-to-call from the corporate directory may only save 20 seconds per call. When applied to thousands upon thousands of calls a day, however, this capability can show significant savings and help eliminate misdialed numbers.

Now consider the CEO who is always looking to see how technology can be used strategically to create a competitive advantage. The savings or benefits may not be immediately obvious, but technology offers new game-changing ways of doing business. For example, the delivery company that incorporates GPS into its vans and then calls or messages its customers 15 minutes before a delivery to confirm availability can create true differentiation and a significant competitive advantage.

In order to evaluate the advantages of CEBP within your business, you need to know who your targeted users are and how communications-enablement affects them. Additionally, recognize that some business applications are better suited for CEBP than others. Here are five critical considerations that should be taken into account:

Section 2: Five Key Considerations

One - Improve and Expedite Business Processes

Focus on business processes that can be improved or expedited with the direct help of a subject matter expert. These are your sweet spots — the processes that will benefit most from communications-enablement in reducing end-to-end process time.

Consider the financial industry, for example. A broker is talking on the phone to a client who has a tax question. Using a contextual presence application, the broker selects "locate a tax specialist" on her screen. The application

matches the client's profile with a list of individuals who are best qualified to answer the tax question — experts familiar with the state's tax laws and the client's particular portfolio. The broker then sends an IM to the subject matter expert, who immediately replies with the needed information. The result is faster first-time call resolution and likely a satisfied customer.

Two – Maximize Benefits with High Transactional Volume

In order to maximize benefits, a business process should have high transactional volume and adequate duration. It is generally best to leave short, infrequent processes intact as communication-enabling provides little value based on ROI. Take a communications supplier's customer support center as an example. A customer calls about a server problem. The entire technical team is out in the field, but the customer needs help right away. First, a search of an HR database creates a list of technicians who are knowledgeable about that product. Presence information then checks their availability. GPS information from each technician's mobile phone ranks them according to proximity to the customer's site. A phone call, email, IM session or videoconference allows the customer service representative to explain the situation to the best-situated technician and set up a visit with the customer. The result is improved response time and a more satisfied customer.

Three – Automate Communications to Ease Process Breakdown

Look for processes that regularly entail large delays and where a failure to act due to human latency causes those processes to break down. Automating communications can often eliminate these delays. Consider a manufacturing environment where a lack of parts will shut down the production line. Integrating communications with the inventory management system can enable a phone call or IM to the parts manager or even the supplier about the need to order more parts as soon as an incident occurs. A system of escalations can be incorporated if no one acknowledges the request to keep warnings from going unnoticed. Such a system can save hours or even days of downtime by ensuring that information is conveyed, acknowledged and acted upon.

Four – Impact the Bottom Line and Customer Satisfaction

Processes that directly touch customers and partners will have the biggest impact on the bottom line or customer satisfaction — and that, again, is a key objective of better communications.

Sometimes the bottom line isn't measured in dollars and cents but rather in lives saved. For medical centers, intelligent notification services can play a critical role. Consider a hospital environment in which a patient emergency occurs and an expert familiar with the case needs to make a critical, timely decision. A typical hospital paging system does not distinguish between those available for or familiar with a particular case. An intelligent communications-enabled system, however, could evaluate a group of physicians based on availability, expertise and even global location relative to the patient. The system could also help determine the best way to update the appropriate physician concerning the patient's status. Such a system can reduce delays and ultimately lead to an improvement in patient care.

Five – Improve Communications

If transactions have a high failure rate, improved communications can be instrumental in reducing costs, decreasing failures, improving quality and pleasing customers.

Customer-facing interactions are among the most critical of business encounters. Consider a typical scenario in which a customer, in an effort to reach a real person, abandons attempts to navigate through a complex and laborious contact center maze of prompts, or hangs up after being told the call center is “experiencing unusually high call volumes”. Integrating improved self-service communications that allow the user to perform enhanced functions, such as request a call back, are ways in which companies can help attract and retain customers. Look within your organization to identify high failure-rate transactions for which CEBP can help improve the customer experience.

Section 3: Why Avaya for CEBP?

In Avaya’s experience, a broad approach to CEBP is required in order for enterprises to successfully gain initial business value and then build growing momentum for further initiatives. Avaya has a four-fold strategy for CEBP that builds on a sustained product and services investment over many years.

Avaya Agile Communication Environment™ Framework

Central to Avaya’s CEBP vision is Avaya Agile Communication Environment™ software, which is Avaya’s broad application enablement framework. Avaya Agile Communication Environment (ACE) software provides a flexible middleware platform for integrating business processes with multi-modal and multi-vendor communication infrastructures. Included with Avaya ACE are pre-built packaged applications and components as well as high level Web services application programming interfaces (APIs). Internal lab tests indicate these APIs allow development of communication-enabled applications up to 80% faster than traditional methods through the use of SOA based Web Services (XML/SOAP, Parlay X). IT developers can communication-enable applications rapidly and cost effectively without the need for telephony expertise typically required by telecom specialists in traditional CTI-style programming approaches. Avaya ACE also integrates with multi-vendor telephony infrastructures through packaged adapters, which leverage traditional interfaces, such as Application Enablement Services for Avaya Aura™ Communication Manager, Meridian Link Services for Avaya Communication Server 1000 and JTAPI for Cisco, while providing the bridge to new enterprise-wide SIP approaches with the Avaya Aura™ architecture.

Leveraging the Avaya Aura™ Architecture

The Avaya Aura architecture brings together Avaya real-time communications performance and reliability with a revolutionary, enterprise-wide SIP architecture, plus the aggregation of user presence across devices and applications. Avaya ACE is fully complementary to Avaya Aura and extends Avaya Aura communication services into business applications rapidly and easily.

The Avaya ACE Developer Toolkit enables IT application developers to integrate Avaya Aura and multi-vendor communication services with business applications. Users can initiate Avaya Aura communication services directly from their desktop software and also invoke Avaya Aura communication services as a result of automated, business process workflows. Avaya ACE also provides coarse-grained Web services and fine-grained CTI control of Avaya Aura components, including Avaya Aura™ Session Manager, Communication Manager, Application Enablement Services and Presence Services.

Industry Focus

Avaya provides comprehensive CEBP solutions for target industries, including healthcare, financial services, hospitality and education, as well as government agencies, leveraging all elements across Avaya's unified communications, data, and contact center portfolios — including Avaya ACE™ as an integration layer — as well as third-party and new emerging technology product innovations. Examples include our complete Nurse communications and mobile device management healthcare solution, and our Guest Media Hub hospitality solution. Avaya brings deep industry-specific professional services practices and services partners to the planning and delivery of these solutions.

“Leveraging CSC’s Communication Enabled Application practice, we have been able to quickly and easily communication-enable our Jive SBS Foundation. The ability to enable business applications with communications is a key function of CSC’s Communication Enabled Applications practice, which is based on Avaya’s Agile Communication Environment (ACE). Utilizing ACE’s open web services framework our developers – in conjunction with CSC and Avaya – were able to integrate click-to-call in only one week and presence capability just as quickly.”

- Derek DeMoro, Jive Software

Developer Communities

Avaya continues to expand its DevConnect ecosystem of system integrators, independent software vendors, reseller partners with developer services, and corporate developers — providing access to Avaya ACE, Avaya Aura™ and products across the portfolio with technical support, documentation, remote labs, interoperability testing and marketing assistance. Avaya ACE, in particular, allows Avaya to broaden service integrator engagement with partners like CSC, IBM, HP and others. Its SOAP and RESTful Web Services, together with Web Services Description Language definitions, can be easily incorporated into developers' preferred integrated software development environment, such as Microsoft Visual Studio or open source Eclipse Java-based tools. Avaya ACE Web services expand on open standards, including Parlay X, with multi-vendor support for voice, video, presence and other media over time — enabling IT developers to create cross-platform applications without having to contend with the various telephony protocols of the network infrastructure.

Committed to open standards, Avaya leverages services-oriented architecture and Web Services to deliver rich communications-enabled applications and business processes openly, simply and rapidly, with no proprietary architecture to lock you in. Most importantly, Avaya understands your business imperatives. We understand the challenges you face in aligning your IT investments with your long-term business strategy, and we have the solutions, services and expertise to meet those challenges.

Section 4: Learn More

For more information on how Avaya can help your organization gain competitive advantage by integrating business processes with existing communications systems, contact your Avaya Account Manager or Avaya Authorized Partner, or visit www.avaya.com.

About Avaya

Avaya is a global provider of business collaboration and communications solutions, providing unified communications, contact centers, data solutions and related services to companies of all sizes around the world. For more information please visit www.avaya.com.



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