

The Rise of The Dynamic Enterprise

By X. Martin



Some of you may remember when the available bandwidth to access the Internet from home (accessible through dial-up mode) was only 56k. Fewer will recall how IT professionals cheered at the leap from 2400 baud to 9.6 kbps. That was state-of-the-art in the late 1980s. Even in the 1990s, downloading an image was barely considered, and downloading video was not a regular occurrence.

Things are dramatically different today. At any given moment, huge numbers of knowledge workers and Millennials spend a growing amount of time on YouTube, Blogger, Wikipedia, Facebook and MySpace. These services carry massive amounts of multimedia content – and are among the most active cyberspace sites.¹ While accessing these, we are also engaged in several conversations, using professional e-mail to advance projects, process transactions and plan next business steps from our laptops or a smart mobile device.

The increasing speed of data has correlated directly with the acceleration of business dynamics. Survival in today's environment is dependent upon the ability of enterprises to process transactions quickly and accurately, respond to customer preferences or market forces in an agile manner, and collaborate within and between organizations in real time.

Cases in Point

These characteristics epitomize the strategies that have been implemented by the case study subjects presented in this edition of *Enriching Communications*.

In this issue, we feature an article on the transformation that has occurred with the United States' Hampshire Hotels & Resorts, one of the most established players in the hyper-competitive hospitality industry. We see how Hampshire Hotels & Resorts has reinvented how information and communications serve as a competitive differentiator by centralizing, consolidating and integrating key resources to reduce costs.

We look at how Annecy Regional Hospital Center, as the largest hospital in the department of Haute-Savoie in the French Alps, is deploying a state-of-the-art communications infrastructure. In addition to delivering medical excellence and a superior patient experience, Annecy wanted to exemplify the 21st century communication and technological capabilities of a truly dynamic enterprise.

We also explore how A1 Lofts, a growing construction firm in the United Kingdom, cut the shackles of legacy systems and harnessed the power of intra- and inter-organizational collaboration to partner with suppliers and customers.

¹ Alexa.com ranking as of 9/29/08: Yahoo, Google, Youtube, Windows Live, Facebook, MSN, MySpace, Wikipedia, Blogger

A New Landscape

In 10 years, the explosion of bandwidth and proliferation of new services have changed a lot of things for consumers and corporate professionals:

- The volume of data traffic stored and transmitted has grown by an order of magnitude. Instead of measuring the management of kilobytes or even megabytes, we are now likely to discuss terabytes and even exabytes of data.
- Where we once were happy to work in a batched or “asynchronous” communications environment, today there is a growing desire – often a need – for real-time multimedia content across multiple screens, applications and services.
- The balance of power, in terms of who sets the agenda, has shifted. Where once IT professionals and vendors determined who had access to information resources, today users actively influence the adoption of new products and services, and at work, increasingly demand the capabilities available to them in their private lives.
- Financial and operational requirements have changed to reflect emerging priorities to efficiently compete in markets where rivals, services and customers change dynamically. Success is achieved by those who recognize the direction of change and are able to move quickly to exploit the shift.

This is reshaping the enterprise communications landscape and triggering new challenges. We are challenged to manage the complexity of reducing business latency while enabling a mobile workforce – all in a secure environment. We are looking for ways to expand services and capabilities by creating new processes to include partners and customers in an extended concept of the workplace. We are also under pressure to improve performance by accelerating market innovation and internal processes in order to meet both top and bottom lines.

Responding to these challenges requires enterprises to be agile, mobile, knowledgeable and fast. Becoming a Dynamic Enterprise is about maximizing strengths while putting the right services in place for the right people to address business imperatives while preparing for the future. To have a significant competitive advantage, enterprises need to understand the importance of interconnecting core assets, namely the network infrastructure, the people, the processes and the knowledge.

The articles included in this magazine address the service imperatives for enterprises and present ways to improve business operations, strengthen relationships with customers and simplify communications, while delivering superior service to the workforce. To that end, in this issue we explore:

Mobility

An increasingly mobile workforce is redefining the logical boundaries of the enterprise. Fixed-mobile convergence, ubiquitous access to information, demand for end-to-end services along with increased broadband usage are opening opportunities for carriers and enterprises to work together to deliver a seamless experience to any location, on any device.

Efficient communications

Employees are introducing a consumerized approach to technology and business processes. The proliferation of devices, combined with increased mobility and remote/home working practices, create new challenges and opportunities for the IT department. IT leaders are developing new ways to support these emerging requirements while delivering service levels to corporate users in a consistent and reliable manner.

Security

The way a user interacts with a corporate network has changed significantly due to trends in mobility and new access devices. In the past, securing the network put a burden on users: the checks and blocks led to frustration and inefficiency. Today, user-centric security is adapted to modern practices and provides stronger security without impacting productivity.

Customer experience

Customer Relationship Management integration, as well as integration of the contact center operations into a complete customer service value chain, are among the latest opportunities for companies to differentiate themselves in order to keep and grow their customer bases.

Connected knowledge

The concept of connected knowledge is probably the next big thing in the enterprise communications arena. Where the trend is to add intelligence on top of communications to reduce business latency, this intelligence has, to-date, been limited to structured information. Complementary to structured information is tacit knowledge. However, tacit knowledge is often inaccessible because it is stored in people's heads, in paper documents or on hard drives. Supported by Enterprise 2.0 services adoption, tacit knowledge is becoming more accessible to companies, fostering innovation by sharing brain power in real time.

In addition to these service imperatives, we also present a discussion on green and eco-sustainability. We can't imagine any dynamic enterprise that doesn't address both transformation and environmental care.

We are excited to share our thoughts for The Dynamic Enterprise. If, like us, you're convinced the future is not always an increment of the present, it's likely this magazine will help you explore new, promising and innovative directions.

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