

Taking Communications & Collaboration to the Next Level...in the Context of Business Processes

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Adam:

Hi, I am Adam Gartenberg and I am the offering manager for IBM Unified Communications and Collaboration Solutions. I'm here today with Akiba Saeedi who is the Program Director for our Unified Communications and Collaboration Products and we are here today to talk about an industry term that I know I've been hearing a lot about and that is CEBP. Akiba could you tell us a little bit about it, what it means and how IBM is approaching it?

Akiba:

Sure, I'd be happy to. I guess first off what does CEBP stand for? Communications Enabled Business Processes. This is a bit of an industry term that's been used by a number of the analysts firms and others. From our perspective we absolutely think about communication and collaboration and how that fits into your business processes and helps you accelerate the things that you do to run your company every day. A lot of times that means how it actually gets integrated in physical terms, how does that get integrated into your business application that you might rely upon for how you do manage your business processes.

What I will do today is help you understand how this fits in to the overall IBM Unified Communications and Collaboration strategy which you may have heard us coin that term UC². How it fits in and how we are working with other companies around helping them to accelerate their business processes using unified communication and collaboration.

Adam:

So you just talked about the IBM UC² strategy. Can you just give me a high level overview of IBM's approach to this market?

Akiba:

Sure. Real quickly, our vision is really actually very simple and that is to help customers and companies foster innovation and business agility by making it easier for people to find, reach and collaborate with others through a unified user experience. I emphasize those words because it's not just about integrating communications together and putting them in one place. It helps you may be find and get a hold of someone the first time. What do you do when you get hold of a person or group of people? What is it that you do together and how does that get captured and who else gets access to it? That is the whole aspect of collaboration that is really fundamental to

our overall vision and how we go about executing and delivering capabilities as part of our strategy.

That is our vision. Our strategy is based around four key elements. The first one being the delivery of a unified user experience. We do that through an open and extensible software platform which is Lotus Sametime that intelligently integrates the communications and collaboration silos and capabilities that you may have in your organization today or that you want to have in your organization moving forward across a multivendor environment. That means whatever PBX system you may be using, TDM or IP telephony, audio conferencing, video conferencing, INs, web conferencing, e-mail etc., we can bring those capabilities together in a unified user experience because of the plug-in model of Lotus Sametime. That's kind of the first key tenant.

The next two are really about the technical capabilities, technical services and industry expertise that we can bring to bare. We have service folks that can help you plan, manage and deploy your overall IP or network convergence, your IP telephony rollout as well as integration with the application for an all inclusive environment. Call centers is another key capability. So we have technical services, long-standing expertise, certified practitioners with all the major telephony vendors and video providers to help you around reducing risk and speeding up time to value and deploying these types of solutions.

We also have from an industry expertise perspective folks that specialize in specific industries and help you optimize business processes and applying technologies like Unified Communications Technology to your business processes.

The fourth key tenant to the strategy is really about a broad partner ecosystem. Whenever you have a platform you want developers and partners to extend and add value to, that ultimately benefits customers. That gives you choice and flexibility of integrating with a lot of the various telephony vendors that you may prefer as part of our ecosystem as well as video vendors. That helps you get more value out of your existing investment as well as be future proof if you will for what you might choose to do moving forward knowing that many of them will essentially integrate with your front end being Lotus Sametime.

Adam:

Okay, I know that it's a pretty broad strategy there. In talking to companies, a lot of them have questions about where the best place to get started is. Do you have any advice on that?

Akiba:

Some companies are coming at this from doing a voice upgrade and therefore that is the first step for them. We have people on the other side of the infrastructure equation coming at this from a collaboration and a desktop perspective that are looking at expanding that side of the house and then later down the road looking at how they're going to add telephony. One starts with the

collaboration and adds telephony and the other one might start with telephony and add collaboration. There are two infrastructure points of view.

If you picture two opposite ends of the UC continuum, there are business drivers that I've seen companies that I've sort of categorized into two areas. One is we absolutely see some organizations standardizing we are going to adopt this across the enterprise. We see inherent value and productivity benefits in combining all these silos across users and across divisions and we are going to just deploy across the company and that's the decision we've taken. I see other companies that are looking at this more from a departmental or division perspective and looking at targeting very specific process processes that they are going to get started with from a unified communications perspective because that's probably the easiest and most tangible place to actually prove a return on investment. When you can measure a process that took you 10 days before and because of some of the technology that you're now applying now takes you 2 days, there are very tangible business results that you can derive from that.

Adam:

So let's talk a little bit more specifically around that CEBP acronym that we started it with. What do we see there in terms of the role it plays for companies as they are able to roll out these solutions?

Akiba:

Sure. I think the easiest way to do that is to talk about a couple of examples that demonstrate this. One of the first examples is an organization or company called Care Stream. They're the former imaging division of Kodak. They build and deliver radiology solutions and applications that they then sell to hospitals and doctors in the radiology field. One of the things that they understood or viewed was the way that doctors were interacting with one another around doing a diagnosis. So an x-ray gets taken, there's all sorts of data about a patient. There is a whole process that occurs in how those images are shared and transferred and handed off to others. How one referring physician might communicate with someone else getting a second opinion and/or a lab technician that needs to provide some level of information about a given patient's data or x-rays. In that process what they found was there was this gap and ad hoc communication and really facilitating how all the people that were associated with the diagnosis process actually interact with each other and how easily they could do that.

We worked with them to integrate Sametime directly into the radiology application. Now what they are able to do is right within the context of the applications that their business is about and they manage their patient's diagnosis through, right there they can see whether another physician is online or not. Associated with a given patient, they can see which doctors are consulting on that particular patient and be able to, right there within the application, see that they are online and available, click and they can either start in a message session, they can share visual images, screens back and forth or they could escalate that to a voice conversation. If typing doesn't quite get what you need done, they can click a button and escalate that to a voice conversation.

Whether the two people connecting or three people connecting are in a hospital, or working at home, or wherever they may be, it makes it very, very easy in the context of that patient's diagnosis to connect with the person that you need relevant to speed that along.

From their perspective they are helping to increase the accuracy and provide faster diagnosis for their patients and their accelerating patient care which fundamentally is the difference in their business.

Another great example is an insurance company in the Midwest, a company called Celina Insurance. They have 170 employees, they are a smaller sized insurance company and they operate and sell products through a series of independent agents. They have 500 independent agents, that these agents can sell products from any insurance company. What makes them loyal or what makes them want to do business with the Celina?

What they looked at, they looked at how do we create a competitive advantage and how do we streamline essentially the sales process of our products through these independent agents. What they did was they put on an external website, they put various capabilities that allow these independent agents to do things like create claims, submit and process claims, and right there where they're used to interacting with the Celina Insurance Company for the different forms and things that they need to process the sales product, right there they also have presence enabled those websites so that it makes it very simple for an independent agent to be able to connect to somebody inside the company. They may be sitting at a customer site and they can very discreetly and easily ping someone in the background through the fact that they see an agent is online and available, initiate an instant message with someone back in Celina right off of the public websites and they can get a very quick answer for the customer that they're sitting there in front of which improves their customer service.

Ultimately it made Celina easier to do business with which created a sense of loyalty amongst their independent agents. Some of the cost benefits they received is because more and more communication the agents liked doing the instant messaging method of communication, they had less and less phone calls going in through the one 800-number because of the different form of reaching folks inside the company that was easier and more convenient. That then allow them to reduce their call center staff by 40% as well as it reduced the number of phone calls coming in because a single person back in Celina Company can manage four conversations during an instant message session. You can have four different instant messages going on at once but if you're on the phone with somebody, you can only talk to one person at a time. It improved the productivity of those agents and through those combined costs it save them over \$3 million in use of these kinds of technologies that are integrated into their business processes which is the sales process providing very tangible business results.

Adam:

It really sounds like they're able to come in and put this to work right away and see these benefits from integrating these communications and collaboration capabilities into their business processes.

Akiba:

Yes and both of those examples you had a pretty existing series of processes and you had existing websites and applications are you injected the unified communications and capability of Sametime into.

There are other examples where one of the state universities that we work with, they have a really great example where they had an entire vision around creating a Collaborative Ecosystem is what they called it. They are commuter schools so their students leave campus every single day. They have alumni that they try to keep a community field with those alumni. So in their case what they did was they designed an overall system that brought together the different stages that a student went through and the different roles that people interact through the university. Whether you're a faculty member, a new recruit student, and existing student in the class that's going through the registration process or whether you're an alumni, based on your role you get capabilities and services and content that are appropriate for who you are.

In their case they actually defined what they called process maps. They tied it very directly to their directory system so that based on who you are logging into the system it automatically provisions you for the classes that you might be registered for, for the content associated with those classes as well as the other students, the teachers assistants, the professors, that all may be associated with the given class. In this context they delivered a portal at the front end. They use e-mail and real-time communication capabilities like Lotus Notes and Sametime and they got all that combined together with your registration system and other university applications that are very directly tied very important for them, self provisioning mechanism.

So when I'm a student and I am now taking a class, when I log into this class page I can see the other students and if they're online or not. Instead of being forced to do office hours from one to 2 p.m. as the only time I can speak with the professor, if we're both online at 10 o'clock at night that's when we have at our "office hour" discussion. Because all the other students are commuter students there's online meeting capabilities right there in the context of that class. It facilitates the students being able to and/or with the professor being able to collaborate even though the two or three or group of people might be all in their home locations are in different places.

From their perspective once they define the process map and the services that they want to be assigned to each role of person, then adding new services like video services which is something of their future roadmap, all they need to do is inserted in their framework that they've already created and it creates a more seamless way for them to introduce new capabilities to their students by adding further communication modes to the process that they've already defined.

It's a really powerful example of someone who actually started as the definition of the process in a framework that allows them to easily add services when moving forward.

Adam:

Is there any advice for someone looking to get started here or next steps for the folks listening?

Akiba:

Absolutely. First of all you can certainly go on to our website and hear from some of these customers who've recorded webcasts talking about their own experiences and that might be of interest to you. As well, there's information about Lotus Sametime that you can find on our website. The other thing that I would suggest to those of you listening is if you're trying to consider where you get start with the unified communications and collaboration. If you think this is the right angle for your business, talk to your business units. Talk to your line of business executives and understand sales, customer service, marketing. These are the types of organizations that usually can add more revenue to the top line that your company is usually willing to invest in new technology areas to help you accelerate.

I would certainly recommend that you speak with some of those folks and understand the business problems they may be trying to solve and how some of these types of technologies could be applied to help accelerate their business objectives.

Adam:

Okay, certainly that was very informative. Thanks Akiba and we hope this was informative for all of you out there as well. Take care.