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Aastra – BroadSoft Partnership Delivers UC Possibilities

Posted by [Marty Parker](#), on August 04, 2007

On Monday, July 30, 2007, Aastra Intecom announced Clearspan™ as 'a new Unified Communications solution' for large enterprises. I received a briefing on the solution last week from Charles Henderson, Senior Director of Marketing, and Robyn Thompson, Aastra USA Inc. Marketing Manager.



The top two highlights, from a Unified Communications (UC) perspective, were (1) that Clearspan is integrated with Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 from the outset, and (2) that Clearspan is entirely designed as a SIP-based, software solution incorporating the service provider reliability and capability brought through an alliance with BroadSoft. The other highlights of scale, flexibility and UC potential follow from those capabilities.

The first highlight, integration with Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, is accomplished via linkage to the Microsoft implementation of the CSTA interface standard. With this, the users will be able to control and launch Clearspan calls from within Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Office Communicator. With this functionality a user could click to launch a voice call from an e-mail message or an instant messaging session. (Note: The click-to-call functionality can also be achieved with an Aastra-provided Outlook toolbar, without CSTA integration.)

Incoming calls can be simultaneously presented to multiple end-points, including the Clearspan phones and softphones, the Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 and mobile devices.

The CSTA integration will also enable sharing of presence information, providing automatic 'on the phone' status throughout the Microsoft Office 2007 applications suite.

All of these capabilities have the potential of enhancing collaboration and accelerating transaction completion, as well as boosting personal productivity.

The more advanced UC applications, which are based on the integration of the UC functions into business processes and software applications, are also enabled by the combination of Aastra's Clearspan Java development environment and Microsoft's Office Communications Server 2007 SDK.

Overall, it's impressive that Aastra delivered both the user UC functionality and the business process UC functionality from day one. This could significantly increase the ROI potential of the Clearspan solution by enabling the higher returns of business process improvements in addition to the basic employee productivity value.

The second highlight, that Clearspan is a SIP-based software solution "from the ground up", should make this an attractive option for large enterprises as they look to the future.

As a software solution running on IBM Blade Servers with a flexible number of instantiations, enterprises can extend the same functionality from a lab or pilot environment right on up to tens of thousands of users. The software is entirely licensed on a per-user basis, allowing the software

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by **Marty Parker**

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licensing costs to track with the deployment plans. The per-user license is independent of the number of end-points associated with each user, allowing for very creative models such as linking a user's SIP Office phone, cellular mobile phone, one or more softphone versions, and a home office phone to a single system architecture and deployment model.

Reliability is inherited throughout from the service provider success of the BroadSoft application server and supports redundant operation of all server elements.


The software includes a "complete enterprise feature set" and includes integrated voicemail, unified messaging, conferencing, call recording and call center applications. Building on the SIP architecture and service provider heritage, other features include virtual receptionist, user self-provisioning, multi-media softphone, and fixed-mobile convergence (FMC).

Aastra also makes a point of the richness of the end-point choices available with Clearspan, ranging from the most economical residential end-points, to SIP-based desktop phones, to secure wireless SIP-DECT devices.

Of course, the value of all these functionalities is now to be assessed and proven in the market, but Aastra appears to be starting from a good foundation.

The bottom line, it seems to me, is that Aastra Intecom has done a quite responsible and effective job of serving their current customers, who have seen radical innovations with the IT-architected IBX, Intecom E, and Pointspan as well as providing an attractive option to other large enterprises. The hope is that Aastra and their creative customers will use this innovation to advance the adoption and exploitation of Unified Communications to produce compelling ROI and to fuel value-based growth in the communications industry.

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