Unified Communications (UC)

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The "Last Hurray" of Disparate Communication Systems and Technologies is...

...the "Unification" of Unified Messaging and Communication Vendors!

Global Technology Unification- A Welcome Change...

The final stages has finally arrived, set for the biggest fight in the history of Unified Communications among key Vendors, Technology Partners and Manufacturers such as Google Inc, Oracle Corp, CISCO, IBM Corp and Microsoft, among many others. It might include the free software movements only in a certain category of the obvious consumer IM, that's freely available.

This imminent total knock-down and complete knock-out situation is nicely "transitioning" to a very much desired technical unification, and the convergence of several disparate technologies. The reality of the situation is that the choice of Vendor can easily make or break a service provider's competitive advantage for several years to come. We must note that the TRUE power of TEAM work is very similar to the true POWER of a Unified Environment, in this case, the Unification of Unified Communications System among different TOP Vendors. The vendor-side Unification would then enable tightly Unified IT.

The concept of unified using digital convergence technology is a very big and hot area; as it's happening right now. The idea of unification is not about what technology and vendor is the best and the greatest. It's that of strategic interoperability, working together to reach a common unified goal in one direction. This is not about competition. The ERA of competition is now over, and the entire industry is getting much more consolidated than ever. It's about arriving at the highest-level of a very rich and exciting UC experiences for the customers, individuals, partners, business departments, consumers- the end-user, homes and everyone, seamlessly, using the technologies.

Let's take a brief moment, step back to look at a thing that happened in 2000 when Microsoft took an initial big step into the Enterprise Real-Time Communication and Collaboration space, with built into Exchange 2000 with IIS. All of that structure changed with the **"Highly Publicized Security Threats"** that plagued the OS, such as the IM Phishing threats, the possibility that the company's divisions were being split at the time, in addition to ongoing stiff competition with **free operating system Linux**, which was followed by a **most popular search Technology and Web advertising genius offered by Google**, alongside the "unforgiving" huge loss in revenue to the biggest software giant from changes made to licensing programs selling directly to consumers, using both the direct and hybrid model at the time. They were very closely followed by extremely stringent compliance requirements such as SOX, after what happened with Enron Corporation, Arthur Anderson and several others- **The IM Archiving capability and feature was born in addition to tons of other regulatory and compliance requirements that followed.**

The True POWER of Unified- Just like TEAM work... has arrived...

The true POWER of Unified among UC Vendors is something one would really appreciate- Several years ago, in 1995 - 96, while playing European Technologies, most CD Players then, also played back, or accessed DVD and VCD contents.

In the US, one would need separate drives to access a CD and DVD content, and I just wondered why. Yes, there was something with the FCC rules, innovation, and the consumer spending, especially, **capitalism, with money changing hands that drive the economy**- a good thing, for a strong, good and healthy economy.

In 2003, Live Communications Server 2003 arrived with SIP (Sessions Initiation Protocol), then LCS 2005 with its Service Packs that's being followed closely by OCS 2007. Today, right now, one can connect up with one on Yahoo IM Messenger and Windows Live Messenger seamlessly with Microsoft paying Yahoo for any of those individual and personal open IM connections made to Yahoo, they informed us in 2006**,** while we were seeking to create and add a specific solution for small businesses using the communicator. The difficulties associated with cross-platform - and - cross-vendor connectivity and **interoperability** will soon become a thing of the past with Microsoft on the software side with multi-billion dollar investment in R&D, AT&T with several other Major Telecommunication companies in the US and in the UK; in the front laying **Fiber Optic** pipelines building the environment to make them happen.

At this time, **Exchange** and **OCS** (the Office Communications Server) **/LCS** (the Live Communications Server) for Email Messaging and IM -**RTC**), then **SharePoint** and **Groove** (Collaboration) respectively are entirely separate Microsoft Technologies and Products. Though, similar in some ways, they are fairly different in many other ways, Technically Speaking. In the near future, as it's happening now, 8 years later (in 2007/ 2008 precisely), the Microsoft strategy now goes back again to the early 2000 Exchange IM Integration days**-** still very much a platform company. The **Unified**- Where LCS/OCS and Exchange, though will remain as distinct products; they'd continue to blend together to a point it becomes extremely hard to tell the differences**,** while connecting up seamlessly with SharePoint, Microsoft Groove, **Microsoft Syspine IP PBX Voice Integrated Phone System** and the **MS RoundTable.**

In the Microsoft Unified Communications complementary Family style together, Exchange and **LCS/OCS, becomes *permanently* married with Active Directory (AD) Server *Forever.*** They very much could include the merging of Voice, Voicemail, Video, Media, eMail, IM, Fax, Data, Databases, Web Conferencing, Video Conferencing, Call Management; bringing in IPTV with Cable TV, TV and Radio Broadcasts into the different products seamlessly.

A lot would be tied back to the IT Infrastructure, Architecture, Active Directory, Directory Services, Domain Space, and **Connectivity Expertise** *(with consideration to Active Directory Forests, Trees, Child Domains, in combination with Single and Multiple Domain Topologies that may be involved)* along with a **solid understanding of the these current, future and Third Party Products**. It's nothing new that Microsoft is a company that re-invents its products, and long term things and strategies on an on-going basis, **constantly. Many of which has been 3, 5, 10, to 20 years, and more, ahead of its time. The**

challenges associated with having points of failure for all your messaging and communication systems in an environment remain very obvious. There is still a possibility that it could easily happen.

The different aspects of seamless Connectivity across Firewalls, Access Proxies, Gateways, Directors, Pointers and Redirectors; the highly needed IM and **Voice**OIP / Telephony **Federation Feature** that comes into play with the Directory Services, SIP, TLS, Mutual TLS, DNS, WINS and **several other Protocols**, only to mention but a few. The **engineering** and **software (the APIs) integration part of the equation** for each vendor's software and hardware products are as flexible as they could get complex. Is there an immediate answer to all of that? They'd probably get extremely complex depending on your unique business technology environmental needs and variables. **They are now being designed to work together with your *existing equipments*, *with the arrival of Office Communications Server 2007 (OCS), breaking the VoIP barriers.***

There is no doubt that the key challenges that will continue for a long time are in the areas of making the right combination and choice of vendors for your UC Systems and Solutions; the right Forest and Domain Level Architecture, QOS and High Availability of service. Regular utilities such as Telephone Systems, Water and Electricity has remained as reliable not until a disaster strikes, considering that the physical towers and structures are put out of service. The limitations in just about every disaster situation are still obvious, and that's just one aspect. **Unified Communications exceeds that level**, **it's about time it simply happened.**

On the business side of things, SMBs and Enterprises will appreciate how **streamlined communications will address their unique needs** and **business communication challenges,** where **presence information is built-in**, so an operator, **business partners**, **members of a team**, a personal assistant or a secretary would instantly know if someone is available, when the person **becomes available**; and their location by just looking at such information like an icon, which can be replaced with their picture, right on the screen.

Typically, in today's communication world, **communication mediums are completely separate**, it's very common for someone to send the same or similar message(s) through all the different communication mediums available, thereby, not only **wasting valuable time**, adding to **overhead costs of doing business**, but also ***distorting*** real communication that was supposed to take place in the process.. For example, placing a call to the office phone line, only to end up leaving a voice mail message, call the persons cell phone, to end up doing same, then send a fax, email, and IM, and even try the home / home office number very unsuccessfully. **Then the recipient would go through all these messages.....**

Integrated with an ERP, SAP, Dynamics or a **CRM system, implemented to suit the business needs, skill sets, work styles,** and the link with MS Outlook, **a sales rep will be able to determine the availability of goods,** and the **right persons to contact directly, right from the phone screen,** to complete an order or to perform any business transaction. If a person is in a meeting, **busy**, or **may not be interrupted**, you will know if they'd be reached by Instant Messaging- and probably get a much faster response that way, conveniently; if they become available to join you in a conference or a conversation, **then you'd simply call them on any device they are using,** AnyWhere they are located, **and simply drag and drop their icon into the conference/ your conversation window,** in a very much more simplified and smooth communications manner without having to deal with the **complicated and confusing buttons** of a typical PBX Phone System.

Ifeanyi's Final Notes and Commentary...

Now that a lot of the work is also being done on the UC Platforms side that will help businesses and individuals react quickly and more efficiently to Business *opportunities*, business needs and conditions. **Again, it goes back to a thorough understanding of an environment, the type of business, how the people work, and the business requirements.** This is where we'll probably pause for a while to ponder at our options when it comes to *Unifying* **Operational Hardware Architecture, Software Choices**, **Systems Integration Solutions, Security**, **Access Permissions**, **Infrastructure, Identity Management**, **High-Availability**, Clustering, **Redundancy**, Capacity, Load Balancing, **Storage Systems/ Sub-Systems Resilience**, **Instant Disaster Recovery**, and how everything else fits into the ultimate long-term and short-term business side of things. Then that very level of implementation where a customer's traditional VOICE phone lines gets unplugged, and gets plugged back in integrated with a UC System, and they'd be very ok. **It's possible, they can be accomplished!**

With the new Globrocks Futuristic Solutions Research, and *Consultative Approach to Business Technology Services and Solutions*, **we go in to look much deeper, we dig deep** into environmental variables of each **unique** Systems Architecture, Infrastructure, Business Technology Needs and the Pain Points within an Environment.

***See-Unified Communications** In Real Action in the **Microsoft UC Action Video**

When you start building your Unified Communications (UC) Environment consider a Unified IT Architecture Infrastructure Approach, then you *first* take the Active Directory into that UC Design Implementations, the most widely used Directory acting as a building block for its *Foundation*.

*An Overview of Unifying Business Technologies-

- **An Explanation of Unified IT Architecture Infrastructure**
- **What is Digital Convergence?**
- **The Next-Generation** 2008 Technologies into **Next Decade**
- **The History, Role and The Future of Cloud Computing, Online**
