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Aspect Software Moves to Unified Contact Center Management

Jim Davies

Aspect Software has acquired SophistiCom Technologies to add quality management to its contact center software. It expects integration with its Performance Optimization offering by the end of 2006.

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Event

On 4 April 2006, Aspect Software announced the acquisition of SophistiCom Technologies, a privately held provider of quality management (QM) software. It did not disclose the terms of the deal.

Analysis

The idea of contact center performance optimization (CCPO) is to unify traditionally separate contact center tools ranging from workforce and quality management through to performance management analytics and e-learning. Aspect Software has grown through acquisitions and had been looking to further expand its portfolio of software for CCPO. But Concerto's acquisition of Aspect Communications at the end of 2005 delayed investment in a QM vendor.

SophistiCom is relatively small, with only 10 employees; the largest of its 25 customers has 250 seats. But Aspect says the smaller company's complementary, .NET-based architecture will scale and simplify future integrations. Also, SophistiCom's offering is not as sophisticated as the leading QM products: It lacks multisite management, advanced call tagging, support for recording voice over IP (VoIP) and speech analytics. But Aspect's much larger research and development resources should accelerate development in these areas and others.

SophistiCom's product will complement Aspect's workforce and performance management tools as part of Aspect's Performance Optimization offering. This offering still needs an e-learning capability, such as that offered by Witness and Envision. Aspect has, however, developed and accumulated a broad set of offerings, with its complementary automatic call distribution (ACD) and predictive dialer capabilities. Some integration is in place, but unification with a single user interface and agent database will take some time.

Recommendations

- **Aspect customers looking for complementary QM:** Investigate SophistiCom's product and weigh its unproven scalability and weaker features against the benefits of a potentially unified CCPO offering from a single vendor. Expect diminishing collaboration with other QM vendors. Seek timescales for the availability of required functionality and wait for sizeable references to become available.

- **SophistiCom's customers:** Expect to benefit from the stability of a larger vendor, faster development and a complementary portfolio. Be aware that your ACD vendor may be reluctant to certify integration to a rival's system. Seek assurances for continued development of interfaces to non-Aspect technologies and look for favorable pricing of Aspect’s traditional high-end offerings.

Analytical Source: Jim Davies, Gartner Research

Recommended Reading and Related Research

- "MarketScope for Contact Center Quality Management" — The market for call recording systems is evolving rapidly as companies accept features such as workforce optimization and speech analytics. **By Jim Davies**

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- "The Six Building Blocks of Contact Center Workforce Optimization" — Suites of software for workforce optimization will integrate six applications based on different technologies. **By Jim Davies**

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REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Corporate Headquarters
56 Top Gallant Road
Stamford, CT 06902-7700
U.S.A.
+1 203 964 0096

European Headquarters
Tamesis
The Glanty
Egham
Surrey, TW20 9AW
UNITED KINGDOM
+44 1784 431611

Asia/Pacific Headquarters
Gartner Australasia Pty. Ltd.
Level 9, 141 Walker Street
North Sydney
New South Wales 2060
AUSTRALIA
+61 2 9459 4600

Japan Headquarters
Gartner Japan Ltd.
Aobadai Hills, 6F
7-7, Aobadai, 4-chome
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042
JAPAN
+81 3 3481 3670

Latin America Headquarters
Gartner do Brazil
Av. das Nações Unidas, 12551
9° andar—World Trade Center
04578-903—São Paulo SP
BRAZIL
+55 11 3443 1509

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