EMC VNX and VMware help Avaya Bring its Unified Communication Platform to the Cloud

**OVERVIEW**

Avaya Inc., the $5 billion telecom and network giant, wanted to expand the market for its flagship Avaya Aura unified communications platform. Avaya Aura transforms communications beyond basic voice-enabling integrated presence, IM, video and web conferencing - from anywhere and on any device - allowing a company's employees to work together more effectively and productively.

Avaya is a market leader in communications, providing unified communications and contact-center applications to nearly 90% of Fortune 1000 companies. Avaya wanted to enable its customers to take advantage of the cost savings, efficiency and agility delivered by virtualization. With the help of VMware, the company launched a virtualized version of its flagship Avaya Aura product in November 2012. This enabled customers to purchase software applications from Avaya and deploy them in their own VMware virtual server environments.

Avaya also recognized that a large portion of its customer base would derive value from having a turnkey virtualized solution where all the hardware and software components required to run unified communications would be provided in an integrated, pre-tested, rack-based solution. This led to the market launch of the Avaya Collaboration Pod in April, 2013.

Avaya Collaboration Pods integrate computing, storage, networking, gateways, and security into a turnkey solution for communications. They eliminate the complex planning, deployment, cabling, testing and optimization phases when deploying communications applications within the Data Center. Instead of taking months to integrate mission-critical communications services, it can be accomplished in days.

"With the Avaya Collaboration Pod, you simply wheel it into the customer’s Data Center, power it up and connect it to their network." said Liam Kiely, Avaya Vice President, Fabrics & Infrastructure.

Said a 3,600-employee Collaboration Pod customer, "The time from when we opened the crate to getting dial tone to the desk was one week."

Furthermore, with integrated management and support, Avaya Collaboration Pods also help simplify the operational environment for the customer and minimize the number of vendors they have to work with.

"We are seeing a trend towards vendor consolidation within the Data Center. Companies want a single number to call for a project, rather than having to coordinate multiple vendors. The Avaya Collaboration Pod – with integrated support - addresses this."
Solution: Avaya Collaboration Pod

- Encompasses Avaya Aura communications applications, along with preconfigured OEM version of storage from EMC based on the VNX 5300 and virtualization software from VMware.
- Management suite which offers integration with EMC’s Unisphere and VMware’s vCenter platforms.

Challenge: Providing a Best-in-class Solution

As a market leader in enterprise communications, Avaya wanted to partner with leaders in both virtualization and storage in order to bring this integrated solution to market. Avaya found that partner in EMC, with EMC’s OEM Solutions Group acting as a single point of contact coordinating across EMC’s federation of business from VMware to various EMC storage groups.

“With Avaya Collaboration Pods we are bringing together marketing-leading, unified communications and contact-center applications, with industry-leading virtualization technology from VMware and industry-leading storage-area networking technology from EMC, to create a compelling solution for our customers.”

Challenge: Supporting Virtualization with Performance While Ensuring High Availability

For the Collaboration Pod, Avaya required tight integration among all underlying hardware, from server to network and storage components, in order to meet the performance and reliability requirements necessary for supporting communications.

“Communications is mission-critical. We have customers who are enabling 911 services from our solutions. Therefore, the Collaboration Pod has to be robust. It simply cannot fail,” said Kiely.

From the servers, which are deployed in a VMware high-availability cluster, to the VNX storage array, which provides redundant storage and high-availability storage networking, to fully redundant networking and gateway devices – there is high availability built into every aspect of the design.

Challenge: Simplifying the Operational Environment

For the solution to really add value, it needed to simplify customers’ Data Center operations. Therefore, the company also launched the Pod Orchestration suite in order to manage all the components in the Collaboration Pod - from the application layer all the way to the networking layer.

“We’ve put a lot of development effort into the orchestration suite for the Collaboration Pod. By providing a single pane of glass to manage the diverse components in the pod, we can enable our customers to pinpoint the root causes of issues faster and improve overall availability,” said Kiely.

Tight integration between EMC’s VMware’s vCenter and EMC Unisphere management systems was critical as it would provide important functions, such as self-provisioning capability, and would speed up key operations, such as cloning new virtual machines.

Challenge: Enabling Seamless Growth and Expansion

Part of the value proposition for the Avaya Collaboration Pod is the ability to seamlessly add capabilities. Today, the Collaboration Pod is centered around unified communications and the contact center. However, there are plans to add additional capabilities such as video, UcaaS, and CCaaS in the future. Therefore, choosing hardware that can meet future compute and storage requirements was critical.
“EMC’s OEM version of the VNX platform was the perfect storage solution for us. As a mid-tier storage system, customers get a cost-effective, yet highly scalable storage solution which will scale to meet the needs of memory-intensive functions such as contact-center-call recording and HD desktop video call recording,” said Kiely.

WHY EMC?

Avaya has selected EMC’s OEM version of the VNX 5300 storage array as the standard storage platform for all of its current and future Collaboration Pod solutions. According to Avaya’s Kiely, "Reasons for the selection included sheer performance – the EMC VNX 5300 won competitive benchmarks – plus the fact that EMC storage products are easy to integrate with VMware virtualization software via an EMC-supported integration technology known as vStorage API for Array Integration, or VAAI.

“We also prefer EMC storage because its products are so popular in Data Centers around the world,” said Kiely “So EMC is likely to be familiar to our customers already. Also, EMC has a massive worldwide service and support footprint, so we’ll get replacement parts fast, whether we need them in Santa Clara or Munich.”

“We also liked the fact that we can start small and grow storage capacity as it is required – as more advanced contact-center and HD video functionality is added to the solution,” said Kiely.

RESULTS: SAVING TIME AND MONEY WITH VIRTUALIZATION

The underlying Avaya/EMC/VMware architecture greatly simplifies ease-of-use by enterprise users and service-provider customers. Integration and virtualization of networking, computing and storage gives customers greater agility, cost savings and business continuity.

The product is also allowing its customers to achieve a rapid return on investment. Says a state government agency that recently deployed the product, "We anticipate a return on investment in under a year" due to the advanced communications features of the product and the ability to eliminate old telecom systems.

THE FUTURE: MORE APPLICATIONS

The Avaya Collaboration Pods will continue to evolve to support new form factors and new solutions. For example, enhancements such as HD desktop video and new Collaboration Pod solutions to enable UCaaS and CCaaS (unified communications and contact-center-as-a-service) services will support Avaya’s dominance in the unified communications/call center markets.