2017 Global Enhanced User Experience for Unified Communications New Product Innovation Award
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Background and Company Performance

Industry Challenges

With almost every business embarking on the digital transformation journey, IT infrastructure is constantly growing. At the same time, different enterprises are adopting different unified communications (UC) platforms, devices, and media (audio/video) from numerous vendors, making it quite imperative for enterprises to have holistic visibility throughout the network to improve the quality of service (QoS) and boost users’ quality of experience (QoE). However, Frost & Sullivan points out that the growing complexity in IT infrastructure is challenging the efficient management of QoS and QoE across geographically dispersed networks, making it both expensive and difficult to implement.

Inconsistent implementation of QoS policies makes the UC environment unreliable, compromising the user experience in the process. In addition, enterprises have to invest heavily to control QoS policy configurations across both wired and wireless networks. This process is time consuming, with implementation taking months and slowing down other applications, such as Jabber.

New Product Attributes and Customer Impact

Match to Needs

The rising complexity of a UC environment can be strongly attributed to the different UC platforms and network elements present in that environment, along with the different mediums, such as personal computers, mobile phones, and tablets. Additionally, different geographies from where users join calls add a layer of complexity to a UC environment. Nonetheless, managing QoS and QoE is becoming increasingly challenging, as it is time consuming and expensive. In average to large-sized enterprises, several employees are involved in the QoS change process, which consumes a significant amount of time and resources that the enterprise could otherwise utilize to improve and upgrade network performance.

Looking to make the QoS process simpler, Nectar’s innovative QoS cross-platform software called Evolution replaces the need for manual intervention with automation to initiate a QoS change, thus quickly configuring QoS policies in a matter of seconds for enhanced calls or additional network capabilities. To date, customers have been configuring QoS on the core of the network infrastructure down to the distribution area, instead of reaching out to the network’s edge during large-scale implementations this process is extremely time consuming and cost draining.

Industry-first Nectar Evolution leverages Nectar’s rules-based policy engine to orchestrate QoS dynamically across Cisco’s wired or wireless network infrastructure by first offering a pre-configured QoS policy to the user. When a user registers on the network, Nectar
Evolution confirms if the UC endpoints are registered. The Nectar policy engine, integrated with Cisco’s easily configurable software-defined networking (SDN) Application Policy Infrastructure Controller-Enterprise Module (APIC-EM), instantly transmits specific QoS-related information to Cisco’s APIC-EM application programming interface (API), which then configures the QoS policy and matches the particular IP, device type, and the remaining Cisco hardware components in only a few seconds. Providing the user with correct QoS-related information that matches the registered UC device optimizes an enterprise’s time and resources, translating into enhanced network performance.

Because this process expedites the change in QoS configuration, Frost & Sullivan appreciates how enterprises can then utilize the saved time in other activities to enhance their networks’ operational efficiencies.

**Reliability**

Nectar Evolution enables customers to identify UC applications on the network and validate if an actual UC device/user is registered to the network. Previously, customers had to use their conjecturing abilities before adding traffic to the network, or prioritize a queue of applications over others present in the network. Customers used to place audio as well as video differentiated services code point (DSCP) markings from already verified devices at those points. However, the network often denied trusting such markings, as it could not identify the actual device that was sending any traffic over to that network.

In contrast, by adopting Nectar’s offering, customers can trust those markings coming from UC devices, facilitated by the trust and security Nectar Evolution already provides by confirming that all devices/endpoints in the network are registered and syndicated to manage calls. With this, traffic is generated from an endpoint/device only when a user/device logs into the network. When a mobile device registers to call control over a Wi-Fi network, Evolution can instantly identify and confirm if it is registered. When an endpoint registers, Evolution detects the IP address of that endpoint and automatically configures a pre-defined QoS policy that leverages Cisco’s APIC-EM to automate QoS for UC applications. This process provides enterprises with end-to-end visibility into network performance, whether wired or wireless, by UC devices/platforms/users in real time.

Such reliable intelligence provides enterprises with the right insights needed to take prompt actions to boost the performance efficiency level of their UC environments and ensure that users enjoy a high-quality UC experience.

**Positioning**

By supporting Cisco UC and Microsoft’s collaboration environments and integrating different UC platforms, devices, third-party applications, and network components from numerous vendors, Evolution’s ability to automate the QoS policy configuration quickly positions it ahead of the competition. Providing enterprises with complete visibility into
their networks about which users are registering/de-registering or which users are joining a call, including their location, time, UC device/system, and IP, enables enterprises to prioritize the queue, maintain the QoS policy accordingly, and significantly enhance the user experience.

Evolution’s uniqueness lies in its ability to witness calls related to the network in real time. While some of Nectar’s peers are interfacing with Cisco’s EasyQoS application, others are configuring QoS policies on particular services they have sold to their customers. However, none of these competitors have been able to reach out to the edge of the network, unlike Nectar’s Evolution, thus providing Nectar with a distinct competitive advantage.

Such rich functionalities empower maintenance companies and value-added resellers to become total managed service providers. Capitalizing on the automation approach, Nectar helps Cisco’s partners focus on more modern infrastructure designs and expand their product portfolios to allow them to address future needs.

**Customer Value**

Enterprises that adopt Nectar’s Evolution software platform experience superior value by being able to identify any registered UC device/endpoint on the network and securely scale their UC environment by seamlessly configuring QoS policies that match specific UC elements on Cisco’s networks.

Proactively selecting the right QoS policy that matches the UC device type and passing on the information to the registered user can significantly boost the UC environment’s operational efficiency by constantly tracking and optimizing network resources and endpoints. Powered by the Evolution software integrated with Cisco’s SDN controller, the UC environment can set a benchmark by performing at the highest standard. Customers experience the clear optimization of services, such as video, voice, and collaboration, across UC applications, mainly Microsoft Skype for Business and Cisco Unified Communications Manager.

Furthermore, replacing the method of manually configuring or changing QoS policies with an automated approach at the platform plane optimize both time and resources invested in the QoS change/setup process from an early stage. This ability translates into a better return on investment (ROI), as IT enterprises can now perform more tasks within the same time frame, in addition to ensuring the precise configuration of QoS policies. Frost & Sullivan expects the demand for Cisco’s digital network infrastructure (DNA) to soar in the next two years, opening up endless application possibilities for Nectar Evolution when integrated with Cisco’s DNA Center. Cisco’s DNA Center is architected to manage an enterprises end-to-end network from the campus, branch, and WAN to the cloud.
Frost & Sullivan believes that such capabilities significantly improve the user experience, encouraging more customers to successfully adopt Nectar’s Evolution software and optimize network resources.

**Customer Ownership Experience**

Customers’ reluctance to implement new QoS policies on a regular basis can be strongly attributed to the difficulty in having to configure the existing network infrastructure manually for every single UC device/application. This process is time consuming, as well as highly complicated and expensive. In this context, Nectar’s Evolution facilitates the speedy selection and configuration of QoS policies during the implementation of a UC solution, even on wireless networks, which is rare in the market.

When a registered and verified user logs either in or out of the UC environment, enterprises do not have to make the same QoS-related changes across the network infrastructure. Aware of changes in the UC environment, Evolution enables customers to record more than a 35% savings in the time spent managing network operations, thereby incurring a significantly lower total cost of ownership (TCO).

Nectar’s rich experience in SDN empowers the company to comprehend the movement of various elements on the network, covering the user as well as traffic distribution over different parts of the network and call conference. The generated real-time intelligence enables users to understand how they are optimally managing the network capacity and bandwidth and what measures need to be taken to boost network performance.

**Brand Equity**

Already enjoying the status of a certified Microsoft IT Pro Tools partner for the Skype for Business Program, a 2016 Microsoft Partner of the Year Finalist and Depth Partner for the Skype for Business SDN API Program, Nectar Evolution’s inclusion in the Cisco Global Price List since June 2017 is a clear testament to Nectar’s innovative excellence in enhancing QoS and validating markings programmed through manual intervention.

Cisco’s choice to enlist Nectar Evolution has immensely solidified Nectar’s brand positioning and broadened its brand visibility. Nectar can now reach out to a wider base of customers with its Nectar Evolution offering. The company enjoys a strong partnership with Cisco as it is a Cisco-certified interoperability verification testing (IVT) partner as well as a Preferred Solution Partner and Solution Plus Partner of choice. Nectar is the first independent software vendor (ISV) that builds specific solutions to enhance the capabilities of Cisco’s APIC-EM EasyQoS application.
Conclusion

Known for its cutting-edge software solutions targeted for multi-vendor UC environments, Nectar developed the innovative Evolution platform that interacts with the network by leveraging Cisco’s SDN controller, APIC-EM. In addition to improving the overall performance of UC environments running on Cisco-powered networks, Evolution boosts network performance capabilities, while optimizing enterprises’ time, resources, and costs.

Customers’ record savings in operational expenses by 10 times; Evolution automates QoS policy configuration and completes the task in only a few seconds, unlike manual interventions that take weeks for a QoS change to be effective, which is a lengthy and cost-draining process.

Nectar’s Evolution has successfully made its place in Cisco’s Global Price List, standing testament to Nectar’s excellence in developing an innovative product that remarkably simplifies QoS configuration.

With its strong overall performance, Nectar has earned the 2017 Frost & Sullivan New Product Innovation Award.
Significance of New Product Innovation

Ultimately, growth in any organization depends upon continually introducing new products to the market and successfully commercializing those products. For these dual goals to occur, a company must be best-in-class in three key areas: understanding demand, nurturing the brand, and differentiating from the competition.

Understanding New Product Innovation

Innovation is about finding a productive outlet for creativity—for consistently translating ideas into high-quality products that have a profound impact on the customer.
Key Benchmarking Criteria

For the Global New Product Innovation Award, Frost & Sullivan analysts independently evaluated two key factors—New Product Attributes and Customer Impact—according to the criteria identified below.

**New Product Attributes**

- Criterion 1: Match to Needs
- Criterion 2: Reliability
- Criterion 3: Quality
- Criterion 4: Positioning
- Criterion 5: Design

**Customer Impact**

- Criterion 1: Price/Performance Value
- Criterion 2: Customer Purchase Experience
- Criterion 3: Customer Ownership Experience
- Criterion 4: Customer Service Experience
- Criterion 5: Brand Equity

Best Practices Award Analysis for Nectar

Decision Support Scorecard

To support its evaluation of best practices across multiple business performance categories, Frost & Sullivan employs a customized Decision Support Scorecard. This tool allows our research and consulting teams to objectively analyze performance, according to the key benchmarking criteria listed in the previous section, and to assign ratings on that basis. The tool follows a 10-point scale that allows for nuances in performance evaluation. Ratings guidelines are illustrated below.

RATINGS GUIDELINES

The Decision Support Scorecard is organized by New Product Attributes and Customer Impact (i.e., these are the overarching categories for all 10 benchmarking criteria; the definitions for each criterion are provided beneath the scorecard.). The research team confirms the veracity of this weighted scorecard through sensitivity analysis, which confirms that small changes to the ratings for a specific criterion do not lead to a significant change in the overall relative rankings of the companies.
The results of this analysis are shown below. To remain unbiased and to protect the interests of all organizations reviewed, we have chosen to refer to the other key participants as Competitor 2 and Competitor 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement of 1–10 (1 = poor; 10 = excellent)</th>
<th>Nectar</th>
<th>Competitor 2</th>
<th>Competitor 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Product Innovation</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Product Attributes</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Impact</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Product Attributes**

**Criterion 1: Match to Needs**
Requirement: Customer needs directly influence and inspire the product’s design and positioning.

**Criterion 2: Reliability**
Requirement: The product consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations for consistent performance during its entire life cycle.

**Criterion 3: Quality**
Requirement: Product offers best-in-class quality, with a full complement of features and functionalities.

**Criterion 4: Positioning**
Requirement: The product serves a unique, unmet need that competitors cannot easily replicate.

**Criterion 5: Design**
Requirement: The product features an innovative design, enhancing both visual appeal and ease of use.

**Customer Impact**

**Criterion 1: Price/Performance Value**
Requirement: Products or services offer the best value for the price, compared to similar offerings in the market.

**Criterion 2: Customer Purchase Experience**
Requirement: Customers feel they are buying the most optimal solution that addresses both their unique needs and their unique constraints.

**Criterion 3: Customer Ownership Experience**
Requirement: Customers are proud to own the company’s product or service and have a positive experience throughout the life of the product or service.
**Criterion 4: Customer Service Experience**
Requirement: Customer service is accessible, fast, stress-free, and of high quality.

**Criterion 5: Brand Equity**
Requirement: Customers have a positive view of the brand and exhibit high brand loyalty.

**Decision Support Matrix**
Once all companies have been evaluated according to the Decision Support Scorecard, analysts then position the candidates on the matrix shown below, enabling them to visualize which companies are truly breakthrough and which ones are not yet operating at best-in-class levels.
Best Practices Recognition: 10 Steps to Researching, Identifying, and Recognizing Best Practices

Frost & Sullivan analysts follow a 10-step process to evaluate Award candidates and assess their fit with select best practice criteria. The reputation and integrity of the Awards are based on close adherence to this process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Monitor, target, and screen</td>
<td>Identify Award recipient candidates from around the globe</td>
<td>Pipeline of candidates who potentially meet all best-practice criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perform 360-degree research</td>
<td>Perform comprehensive, 360-degree research on all candidates in the pipeline</td>
<td>Matrix positioning of all candidates’ performance relative to one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Invite thought leadership in best practices</td>
<td>Perform in-depth examination of all candidates</td>
<td>Detailed profiles of all ranked candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Initiate research director review</td>
<td>Conduct an unbiased evaluation of all candidate profiles</td>
<td>Final prioritization of all eligible candidates and companion best-practice positioning paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Assemble panel of industry experts</td>
<td>Present findings to an expert panel of industry thought leaders</td>
<td>Refined list of prioritized Award candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Conduct global industry review</td>
<td>Build consensus on Award candidates’ eligibility</td>
<td>Final list of eligible Award candidates, representing success stories worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Perform quality check</td>
<td>Develop official Award consideration materials</td>
<td>High-quality, accurate, and creative presentation of nominees’ successes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reconnect with panel of industry experts</td>
<td>Finalize the selection of the best-practice Award recipient</td>
<td>Decision on which company performs best against all best-practice criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Communicate recognition</td>
<td>Inform Award recipient of Award recognition</td>
<td>Announcement of Award and plan for how recipient can use the Award to enhance the brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Take strategic action</td>
<td>Upon licensing, company is able to share Award news with stakeholders and customers</td>
<td>Widespread awareness of recipient’s Award status among investors, media personnel, and employees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Intersection between 360-Degree Research and Best Practices Awards

Research Methodology

Frost & Sullivan’s 360-degree research methodology represents the analytical rigor of our research process. It offers a 360-degree-view of industry challenges, trends, and issues by integrating all 7 of Frost & Sullivan's research methodologies. Too often companies make important growth decisions based on a narrow understanding of their environment, leading to errors of both omission and commission. Successful growth strategies are founded on a thorough understanding of market, technical, economic, financial, customer, best practices, and demographic analyses. The integration of these research disciplines into the 360-degree research methodology provides an evaluation platform for benchmarking industry participants and for identifying those performing at best-in-class levels.

About Frost & Sullivan

Frost & Sullivan, the Growth Partnership Company, enables clients to accelerate growth and achieve best-in-class positions in growth, innovation and leadership. The company's Growth Partnership Service provides the CEO and the CEO's Growth Team with disciplined research and best practice models to drive the generation, evaluation, and implementation of powerful growth strategies. Frost & Sullivan leverages more than 50 years of experience in partnering with Global 1000 companies, emerging businesses, and the investment community from 45 offices on six continents. To join our Growth Partnership, please visit [http://www.frost.com](http://www.frost.com).