Hot Vendors in Digital Communications, 2017

**Summary:** As the digital enterprise comes online, the demand for more sophisticated and integrated communications will increase. Aragon identifies six Hot Vendors in Digital Communications for 2017.

**Introduction**

Traditional silos of communications are not meeting the needs of the digital enterprise. At the same time, both people and computers need to communicate beyond what traditional voice response systems can offer. The need to take traditional communications and collaboration capabilities, make them digital, and deliver them as part of an integrated business experience is what the market is asking for. Aragon identifies six Hot Vendors in Digital Communications.

Over the next five years, the market for communications will shift to one in which multi-modal interactions and seamless integration with business applications will become the norm. Communications and Collaboration will drive the future of this market. As messaging becomes a larger part of the Communications landscape, Mobile Collaboration is poised to take on a larger enterprise role, by way of shifting email to more of a confirmation tool.

Moreover, the convergence of communications modalities is being driven by the need for better customer experiences. Not every interaction is the same and the digital enterprise needs to have a flexible communications fabric. Once the framework supports are in place, Digital Communications will accelerate its momentum at an even greater rate than it already is today (see Figure 1).

**Prediction:** By YE 2021, 50% of enterprises will deploy Content Analytics for a specific business use case.
Figure 1: Digital Communications will be a key part of the Digital Enterprise.

Fragmented Environment

Today, communication is still fragmented and often isolated. Cellular, Wifi, and PSTN Voice capabilities are coming together but not at the pace that many business leaders want. Certain mobility use cases demand specialized communications that leverage blending traditional, cellular, and radio-based forms together.

Contact Center at the Core

In the Contact Center, there has been a much more immediate need for advanced Digital Communications capabilities than almost anywhere else in the enterprise. Now, as Customer Experience becomes even more vital, the need to offer advanced Communications and Analytics capabilities is critical to enterprise success.

Multiple Capabilities

Digital Communications has always encompassed a voice-led product offering but the market is shifting. In a digital world, it is about switching modalities based on the need or based on the user preference. Digital Communications providers will
need to be able to offer voice, video, collaboration, mobile, and more – everything buyers want.

**Omni-Channel Interactions Are the New Normal**

There are many business use cases for more than one communication method because different users want to use different forms of communication. For example, in sales, sales reps know that today’s customers are busy, and trying to schedule a sales appointment has become much harder. Customers might not have time to look over every email or return a missed phone call – and they might not want to, either.

When it comes to outreach, the efforts made must be omni-channel and take into account the technology that customers increasingly want to use – such as messaging and video. Phone calling and emailing are only part of the communications equation. A Digital Communications platform will provide different areas of the business with multiple forms of outreach capabilities in order to successfully compete in today’s digital world.

**The Business Case for Analytics: Successful Journeys**

Content Analytics (Voice, Video, and Documents) refers to the use of analytics to derive insights from content where the text, voice, or video - a higher-level abstraction of meaning, called a concept – has been organized in a model that can be mechanically processed.

Analytics for Communications can help to streamline a customer journey by suggesting the right form of communications at the right time and by providing insights into what happened during a call. Aragon expects that the demand for Voice Analytics in both the Contact Center and in Sales will grow in a dramatic fashion.

**Prediction:** *By YE 2021, 50% of enterprises will deploy Content Analytics for a specific business use case.*

It is crucial that a communications journey map captures emotions and feelings from all participants whether it is two people on a call or a group video conference; it is important to capture the attention, attitude, goals, and the mood of each participant.
In the Contact Center, Voice Analytics is at the heart of optimization and increasingly, overall Voice Analytics will help to automatically adjust the progress of a customer interaction when certain things are triggered, such as negative sentiment. The soft side of the journey is just as important as the actual journey itself. Higher quality analytics can ensure that the right adjustments are made, often in real-time.

**Chatbots: Adding Intelligence to Computer Conversations**

Due to technologies, such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), software applications can now participate in the mobile messaging conversations in the form of a Chatbot.

For practical purposes, Chatbots define the customer or user experience (CX/UX). This partitioning of functionality makes it possible to retro-fit an Artificial Intelligence (AI) Chatbot to an existing application, which can improve its performance and extend its life without requiring a complete re-write. Adding an AI Chatbot is a lot easier, faster, and less expensive than creating a new natural language interface for an application.

An AI Chatbot must be able to perform syntactic and semantic analysis of the input to determine the intent of the user – Natural Language Understanding – and then identify and initiate an appropriate response. The response may be a simple utterance that was pre-programmed to map to the intent of the input, or it may be a more complex narrative generated from the data – or Natural Language Generation. It is important to remember that AI Chatbots are part of a solution – they are not the solution itself. They can enable conversation with customers, partners, and employees, but they must typically be integrated with applications that provide the functionality indicated by the user’s intent.
As shown in figure 2, the sweet spot for AI Chatbots is acting as the conversational interface for an application that has a specific or well-defined domain – such as customer service requests for a telecommunications provider – and a well-defined set of possible actions, such as “provide a refund”, “initiate a service/repair request”, “add a service”, “cancel a service”, or “elevate the call to a supervisor.”

**Hot Vendors in Digital Communications, 2017**

This research note is not intended to be a complete list of vendors in the market being discussed. Rather, it highlights vendors with interesting, cutting-edge products, services, or technologies.

The 2017 Hot Vendors in Digital Communications include:

- **Calabrio**
- **Five9**
- **FrontSpin**
- **Intelligent Voice**
- **Orion Labs**
- **Tenfold**
Calabrio

Figure 3: Calabrio provides robust workforce optimization and analytics.

Calabrio, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, provides a robust Workforce Optimization and Analytics platform that is sold directly and via numerous resellers/channel networks. With the ability to deploy via cloud, on-premises, or hybrid, Calabrio is ideal for understanding Communications-based customer journeys for both mid-market and large enterprises.

What makes Calabrio hot is its analytics capabilities that can rate performance and uncover insights in any customer interaction. Calabrio Analytics includes text analytics (with the ability to convert speech to text), which enables business stakeholders and the C-suite to understand what customers are saying across channels, such as voice, social media, and email. Its intuitive, drill-down interface allows managers to easily find and listen to calls of interest, then share insights to drive improvements to the customer journey. And the suite offers end-to-end data encryption, security, and complies with PCI and HIPAA regulations.

Who Should Evaluate Calabrio?

Enterprises looking for a full Workforce Optimization and Analytics platform that integrates with other platforms and is cloud-based should evaluate Calabrio. The advanced Voice Analytics with real-time insight on things such as call effectiveness and overall performance.

Note 1: Calabrio at a Glance

Calabrio is a workforce optimization (WFO) and voice-of-the-customer Analytics provider for mid-market and large enterprises. Its Calabrio ONE WFO suite includes Workforce Management, Quality Management, Call Recording, and Analytics on a single, unified platform.

Location: Minneapolis, Minnesota
CEO: Tom Goodmanson
Key Offerings: Calabrio ONE
Availability: Available now
Website: http://www.calabrio.com/
Five9

Figure 4: Five9 looks to make your call center fully cloud-based and provides an omni-channeled approach.

Five9, based in San Ramon, California, is a Cloud Contact Center provider that is growing due to the demand for a cloud-based offering that integrates with mission critical applications such as Salesforce.com. With an omni-channeled approach that allows the use of phone, web, chat, email, video, and social media, Five9 makes it easy to connect with customers and solve problems in real-time.

Five9 is hot because it gives users an intuitive and informative way to manage and connect with customers (see Figure 4 and Note 2). The platform offers historical reporting, recording, monitoring, and influence scores, as well as Natural Language Processing to guide users in real-time. Inbound and outbound calls are made easy by assigning calls to agents within the platform.

Who Should Evaluate Five9?

Enterprises looking for a contact center that is 100 percent cloud-based, offers global capabilities, and can be integrated with their current CRM should consider Five9. Its omni-channel platform brings Contact Centers, Sales, and Service departments into the modern era.

Note 2: Five9 at a Glance

Five9 is a leading Cloud Contact Center that provides full omni-channel capabilities with web, voice, email, and video. Advanced web analytics and customer journey capabilities enable organizations to digitally transform their customer experience to meet the needs of the modern global customer.

Location: San Ramon, California
CEO: Mike Burkland
Key Offerings: Five9 Cloud Contact Solutions
Availability: Available now
Website: http://www.five9.com/
FrontSpin

FrontSpin, based in San Mateo, California and led by CEO Mansour Salame, is a Sales Communications Platform that helps enterprises automate the communications process for sales. With advanced Power Dialing, Pre-recorded Messages, and email templates, FrontSpin offers Inside Sales organizations the power of a Contact Center with advanced automation. FrontSpin also offers a native integration with Salesforce that users will find intuitive.

What makes FrontSpin hot is the automated dialing feature that allows enterprises to automate inbound and outbound calling, real time functionality, and integration with CRMs and other platforms (see Figure 5 and Note 3). With real-time capabilities, recordings of previous calls, easy note taking, and detailed Playbooks, FrontSpin is pushing the envelope in innovation for Sales Communications.

Who Should Evaluate FrontSpin?

Enterprises looking for a Sales Communications Platform that can automate Phone Calls and Emails should evaluate FrontSpin. In an era where Sales Productivity is critical, taking steps to automate the manual task of communications cannot be ignored.

Note 3: FrontSpin at a Glance

FrontSpin is a Sales Communications platform that focuses on outbound and inbound calls. Its platform offers automated dialing, templated emails, and full CRM integration.

Location: Headquarters in San Mateo, California
CEO: Mansour Salame
Key Offerings: FrontSpin Sales Communication Software
Availability: Available now
Website: http://www.frontspin.com/
Intelligent Voice is a Content Analytics platform that can automate the process of indexing and turning video and phone calls into easily accessible content assets. Its AI capabilities give users a big picture view of the content within any speech data set. Intelligent Voice makes it easy to capture the main points of any video, phone call, or delivered voice content.

What makes Intelligent Voice hot is that key words are indexed, which allows users to scroll through the list of key words to find the exact time within a call or video that the speech was spoken (see Figure 6 and Note 4). Intelligent Voice supports both Cloud and On-Premise deployments to help combine new and existing data into one database. With search and analytics capabilities, enterprises can view and interpret what information is trending and what information will provide the most value when making decisions.

Who Should Evaluate Intelligent Voice?

Enterprises looking for an easy way to index and turn voice recordings and videos into easily found content assets should evaluate Intelligent Voice. Going forward, Content Analytics for Voice and Video will be one of the most sought-after capabilities and this makes Intelligent Voice a provider to watch.
Orion Labs

Orion Labs, based in San Francisco, offers Onyx, a digital walkie-talkie that is compact and wearable. Onyx offers push-to-talk capabilities that make it fast and easy to start talking to one or many people in a group who are also using Onyx. Onyx is a digital alternative to more expensive, bulky analog radios and is ideal for firms with mobile teams in markets such as construction, retail, transportation, logistics, and hospitality.

It connects to smart phones and works on any network the phone can connect to. The app displays everyone’s location to simplify coordination. Orion offers a paid subscription service (Orion Pro) for companies that want to have administrative control and flexibility in managing communication. The subscription includes access to mobile app and web-based management tools.

What makes Orion Labs hot is that users can now be in immediate contact with everyone in a group with just the push of a button (see Figure 7 and Note 5). It’s especially useful for occupations that require constant movement and timely customer responses, for instance, a construction worker or retail worker, can communicate with both humans and Chatbots for sharing or gathering information in real-time.

Who Should Evaluate Orion Labs?

Note 5: Orion Labs at a Glance

Orion Labs offers Onyx, a digital and wearable walkie-talkie that connects to an app on your smart phone that enables group chats in real-time over any distance. Onyx can easily be muted and only needs to be pressed in order to communicate with people. Orion’s platform enables Onyx users to accomplish other business-crucial tasks by voice, with the integration of chatbots and other services.

Location: Headquarters in San Francisco, California

CEO: Jesse Robbins

Key Offerings: Onyx Smart Walkie-Talkie

Availability: Available now

Website: https://www.orionlabs.io/
Enterprises with mobile workers who are on the go should evaluate Onyx and the Orion Labs software platform as an alternative to traditional walkie-talkies and push to talk phones. The addition of Chatbots to the platform means that tasks such as checking inventory or shipping status could be done without looking at a phone or computer.

Tenfold

Tenfold, based in Austin, Texas and led by CEO and Founder Patrick Hogan, helps companies have better customer conversations. Tenfold puts customer information into a single unified view during the moment of interaction with a primary focus on Contact Center and Sales Communications. Tenfold is unique in that it integrates with a company’s existing digital communication channels, allowing for rapid time-to-value and increased security.

What makes Tenfold hot is their Universal Data Layer (UDL) (see Figure 8 and Note 6) – which connects to 97% of existing phone systems and major business applications. Tenfold makes customer experience data aggregated, automated, and actionable with a “Data Triad” that enables the best customer experience over the lifetime of each customer. Tenfold’s aggregation technology reaches out to all department systems of record from sales to service to marketing, gathering data into a Universal Data Layer (UDL) that’s available in real-time. Tenfold’s automated data capture makes sure all new activity on every business call, email, text,
and chat is successfully logged, not lost. Then Tenfold makes the data actionable by sending customer representatives and sales associates a single unified display of all relevant information. This is particularly important for enterprises that are interested in capitalizing on machine learning to enhance efficiencies. Tenfold is focused on the data machines use to learn.

Who Should Evaluate Tenfold?

Enterprises looking to improve customer satisfaction scores through improved customer experience and sales departments looking to capture activity data and automate workflow should evaluate Tenfold.

Aragon Advisory

- Enterprises need to evaluate all communications processes with a goal of going fully digital.
- Enterprises should also focus on enabling Content Analytics with a particular focus on Voice for Communications.
- Enterprises should look to retire legacy communications solutions.

Bottom Line

Digital Communications is becoming a more integrated, cloud based, and connected experience. By enabling a fully digital end-to-end process, Digital Communications is making it easier for enterprises to transact information and apply analytics. Enterprises need to make Digital Communications a priority and should evaluate these Hot Vendors and others to help them accelerate their business results.