



Opinion

CA's 2009 Analyst Symposium — Ottawa, Canada

Introduction

CA sponsored this year's information technology (IT) research analyst symposium in one of North America's most beautiful cities — Ottawa, Canada. Picture this: perfect weather, beautiful canals, marvelous architecture — and 40 (or so) analysts all cooped up in an auditorium listening to CA executives articulate the company's various products and strategies; and listening to customers describe their experiences with CA. Despite the city's charms and the beautiful weather, I didn't mind sitting inside for two days listening to CA's story.

Five years ago Computer Associates (CA's former name) was a disaster area of legal problems and customer dissatisfaction. Former company executives were accused of malfeasance; and customers lamented that CA was holding them for ransom from a software pricing perspective. But under new CEO John Swainson, CA has been able to recover its reputation as a customer-focused software manufacturer — and according to the dozens of CA customers to whom I have spoken over the past year, CA has reestablished itself as a trusted business partner.

This new CA is fun to cover. The company emphasizes meeting with customers to understand their needs — and then translating those needs into products and services. (The old CA seemed like a hundred-and-fifty separate companies — each chartered with marketing its own software products). The new CA emphasizes product integration and common software development methodologies such that software developers build products that can more easily work together with other CA products — and such that software developers can easily be transferred between projects as CA adjusts its roadmaps to meet customer and CA priorities. The old CA was a mish-mash of products and services — most designed using different tools and approaches — and, for the most part, there was little alignment with common CA strategic goals.

The new CA is now operating with clear strategic goals and has a common development methodology that encourages product integration, I'll say it again: the new CA is fun to cover.

What Clabby Analytics Learned

There were three CA sessions in Ottawa that *Clabby Analytics* found particularly insightful and useful:

1. Mainframe positioning and progress;
2. Business-driven automation (including workload management); and,
3. Service portfolio management.

CA Mainframe Positioning and Progress

Under the leadership of Chris O'Malley, the executive vice-president and general manager of its mainframe business unit, CA now has a clear strategy in mainframe management as well as a clear roadmap of product deliverables. The agenda that O'Malley is driving calls for the modernization and integration of CA's various mainframe management products into a cohesive software stack.

CA's overarching strategy for mainframe modernization is called Mainframe 2.0. It focuses on simplifying mainframe ownership by providing products and services that will help IT managers simplify management processes. Most notable in CA's Mainframe 2.0 is its focus on finding ways for less-experienced support staff to "maintain, optimize, secure and govern" mainframe environments using graphically-enabled, intuitive, web-enabled, UI-based management tools.

CA was able not only to demonstrate its mainframe management software environment — but was also able to provide some important statistics regarding the amount of time mainframe managers and administrators can save using these products. CA had developers install various CA software products using older tools and utilities — and then had them install the same products using the CA's new mainframe management software. And typically, installers were saving 4-5 hours during the installation process! This is big news because *CA is not just graphically enabling older, character-driven applications (an approach known in the industry as "putting lipstick on a pig") — CA is cleaning up the interfaces while also streamlining the processes behind them.*

Clabby Analytics will be writing quite a bit more on this topic when CA's mainframe management software environment comes out of beta in the September time frame.

Business Driven Automation

The focus of this series of presentations was to show how various CA products could help align IT with business goals and objectives. But what really caught my attention in this breakout section was CA's Spectrum line of products.

CA's Spectrum Automation Manager is an integrated environment that provides tools and utilities for managing virtualization, provisioning, and workloads across a heterogeneous systems. Using this Spectrum AM product set, an IT manager who has a mix of x86 servers, Sun servers, IBM servers, and HP servers running various operating environments can use a common infrastructure to virtualize resources in his/her environment, re-provision resources, and assign jobs to those resources (on an automatic, prioritized basis). Spectrum AM is important because it fills a major gap in the industry right now — the management of heterogeneous, virtualized servers.

Those who know me, you know that I am not a big fan of EMC's VMware (although every other research analyst in the industry seems to be). To me, VMware is too focused on the management of homogeneous VMware servers; and the company has created a separate infrastructure stack to facilitate that process. I really don't like seeing enterprises forced into a position of having to support homogeneous management — and I strongly dislike watching enterprises deploy an infrastructure stack that is not consistent with the heterogeneous systems in their data center. To me, VMware environments require a

different skill set to manage — as well as a lot of investment in VMware infrastructure and management products.

Spectrum can use VMware's hypervisor (the commodity software that virtualizes server resources) as a base — and then builds a complete, heterogeneous infrastructure by linking it with other virtualization environments via cross-platform management tools. CA demonstrated how all of the various Spectrum AM components can work together not only to manage virtualized environments, but also to re-provision systems for new workloads after various jobs complete. And CA also showed how workloads can be assigned to available (and most appropriate) virtualized resources. To me, Spectrum AM can help get VMware users where they need to go strategically — to automated workload management on underlying provisioned, virtualized servers — and it can do it today. And Spectrum AM can do this across heterogeneous environments. *If I were an IT manager whose company has committed to VMware, I'd be looking very closely at CA's Spectrum to help round out my virtualization strategy.*

Service Portfolio Management

I'm relatively new to service portfolio management, so this session served to help me understand the dynamics of this market and the various product offerings that CA has. Suffice it to say that the systems/applications management market is moving toward a dashboard driven model wherein IT managers no longer have to monitor and hunt for issues — systems automatically discover those issues and report them back to managers and administrators. By taking the "hunt" out of the process, IT managers can focus more of their time of solving problems — which is really what you need IT managers and administrators for anyway. Expect more coverage from *Clabby Analytics* on this evolving approach to management as the year goes by.

Summary Observations

It is worth noting that, despite the highlights described in this article, CA does have a few problems. Most notable is that a huge share of the company's business is centered in North America, and its next big market is Western Europe. For CA to grow more rapidly, the company needs to expand into the emerging growth countries of India, China, Brazil, and so on. *Clabby Analytics* has spent a fair amount of time in these regions over the past two years — and it should be noted that these countries tend to use people to solve systems management related problems rather than programs.

Another problem is that CA doesn't currently have the kind of coverage it needs in place to service these countries. To solve these problems, CA is going to have to work its business partner channels a lot harder (and I'd start by working hand-in-hand with the VMware people; but I'd also work a lot more closely with IBM and Microsoft).

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As a final observation, I'll state with pleasure that it is no longer "painful" to cover CA. The company is growing; its customers are — for the most part — satisfied; it has clear goals and objectives; and it is building efficiency into its operations by using a common development model. But, most of all, CA has become "honest and honorable". So, although I did miss a chance to get out and see more of Ottawa and enjoy the great weather, I really didn't mind. It is fun to cover well-run companies that have solid strategies and good execution plans — and CA is one of those companies.

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