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Topic: Collaboration

Issue: Who are the Collaboration providers and how will they compete?

Fuze Acquires LiveMinutes To Compete In A Broader Enterprise Collaboration Space

Summary: *Fuze's acquisition of LiveMinutes is another sign of the growing trend of collaboration providers taking deliberate steps to enter the multimodal collaboration space.*

Event: On May 20, 2015 Fuze announced its acquisition of LiveMinutes, a provider of web-based team collaboration software for desktops and mobile devices. While financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, Fuze also announced a round of \$20 million in funding from Hermes Growth Partners.

Analysis

Fuze is putting a stake in the ground in the expanded collaboration market, converging video and meetings with project- and team-based collaboration. As web and video conferencing converge, other collaboration capabilities also join to add persistence, content and context for distributed teams.

This acquisition makes Fuze a broader enterprise collaboration provider and puts it in the growing mobile collaboration market. The move follows Cisco's recent launch of Spark and Atlassian's acquisition of HipChat to boost its HipChat mobile collaboration tool. These offerings expand their providers' collaboration suites, with distributed teams and mobile workers in mind.

Fuze's collaborative architecture is focused on persistent group chat rooms called "Spaces," where users can access content and engage in real-time interactions. Aggregating meetings with project/team collaboration and content lets Fuze

compete with Cisco and other project-based collaboration providers such as Basecamp and Atlassian. More acquisitions will occur as the market consolidates and providers add adjacent capabilities to their collaboration portfolios.

Collaboration is converging around cloud and mobile, as easy access to the right tools, the right content and the right people at the right time become top priorities. Context is critical to give meaning and purpose to interactions that can be captured and structured to streamline business processes and improve outcomes.

Identity is also a central problem to solve in collaboration. People "live" in different business applications throughout their day and work with a broad range of people both internal and external to their organizations. They need enterprise profiles that aggregate information from all the systems they work in.

While real-time conferencing brings people together, it doesn't provide full collaboration by itself, even with video to provide visual cues and immediacy. People collaborate around specific content in a specific context. Adding content, context and persistence, along with seamless interaction across platforms, will foster better collaboration among internal and external users. Moreover, being able to capture interactions and use them as content and learning resources allows better knowledge exchange, leading to better decisions and outcomes.

Challenges and Opportunities

As with any technology acquisition, Fuze has to integrate LiveMinutes into its portfolio and share its road map with customers and prospects.

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Fuze's current offering already integrates with enterprise directories and a variety of tools for single sign-on, identity management and system provisioning, as well as with Google Apps, letting users create and edit Google Docs from within their sessions. This extends the collaboration capabilities of Google Apps and adds value to the Google tools that enterprises have already invested in.

To provide a more holistic experience without context switching, Fuze needs to tightly integrate its old and new technologies, and it is working rapidly to do so. We have seen a private beta that includes initial integration in several areas, allowing users, for example, to launch a meeting from within a Space or escalate a chat into an ad hoc video call. We expect the fully integrated product to be generally available by late 2015.

Aragon Advisory

- Current Fuze customers should investigate its integrated offerings with LiveMinutes and get guidance from Fuze on its future plans.
- Enterprises evaluating collaboration platforms should put Fuze on their short lists but also request a road map of future capabilities and integrations that align with their requirements.

Bottom Line

The collaboration market is heating up, with a flurry of activity around cloud and mobile. Fuze represents a growing trend in this space to merge real-time and asynchronous collaboration with content and context, aimed at boosting productivity and optimizing for specific business outcomes.

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- [The Aragon Research Globe For Web and Video Conferencing, 2014](#)