Avaya Aura Competitive Overview

Description of Avaya Aura

Avaya introduced the Aura brand in March 2009. The name Aura refers to Avaya’s architecture and is also the umbrella brand for all of its unified communications (UC) products. Products in Avaya’s enterprise communications portfolio include Communication Manager, Modular Messaging, Voice Portal, Meeting Exchange, Application Enablement Services (AES), and SIP Enablement Services (SES).

However, the product that receives the most attention in the Aura architecture is Session Manager. Session Manager, also part of the March 2009 announcement, is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)-based communications platform that was developed from technology acquired from Ubiquity in 2007. Avaya is positioning the SIP-based Session Manager as the communications network core in the Aura architecture.

Avaya’s basic premise for Aura is that IP voice and unified communications have become too complex. Avaya is hopeful that it can reduce the complexity while at the same time reducing costs for enterprise customers through the utilization of SIP. Avaya’s initial focus is on looking to use SIP to reduce costs in the areas of trunk consolidation, toll reduction, and dial plan management.

Importance of Session Manager

Avaya is positioning its Session Manager as being the heart of the Aura architecture. It will play an important role in Avaya’s migration strategy for the recently acquired Nortel installed base. Avaya is banking on Session Manager to integrate and manage multiple multivendor environments, such as Avaya’s Communication Manager and Nortel’s CS1000, in order to protect customers’ investment in their existing technology.

Today the most common deployments of Aura’s Session Manager include:

- Session routing (SIP proxy): The most common deployment
- Enterprise Dial Plan Manager: Connects multiple legacy PBX systems to enable toll bypass and centralized SIP trunking
- SIP registrar capability for SIP endpoints

Aura’s Sales Strategy

- Continue to invest in Avaya and Nortel technology, since Aura provides a natural upgrade path for all existing Nortel voice and UC solutions, with assurance that Aura will protect the customer’s investment
- Use SIP (via Aura) to unify communications networks
- Demonstrate how Aura can reduce infrastructure costs, deploy centralized collaboration applications, and simplify communications
- Expand communications enablement of business applications
- Unify complex communication networks

Aura’s Positioning

- **Scalability:** Scalable to 250,000 users and 25,000 locations
- **Cost savings:** Can use SIP connectivity to reduce public switched telephone network (PSTN) usage through centralized, enterprise-wide routing techniques
- **Multivendor support:** Can integrate multivendor systems, allowing gradual replacement of legacy investments
- **Infrastructure:** Introduces SIP trunking centrally
- **Leader in SIP:** Has enterprise deployments with tens, hundreds, and thousands of SIP users and more than a million SIP trunks/lines
- **Migration at customer’s own pace:** Claims that it is too complex and costly to “rip and replace” everything in one step
- **Application sequencing:** Can deploy applications, including Avaya’s Communication Manager, as a feature server to maintain decades of investment features and user training

Aura’s Weaknesses

- Session Manager is SIP-centric; no other protocols are allowed.
- Session Manager provides no telephony features and no call control capability; therefore, Communication Manager running on Avaya servers is still required.
- Communication Manager 5.2.1 is the only “feature server” that can be sequenced by Session Manager.
- Aura can’t support SIP survivability, unlike Cisco® Unified Survivable Remote Site Telephony (SRST), and only its 9600 series phones are SIP capable.
- Avaya does not provide an end-to-end solution, even in SIP. No session border controller (SBC); it partners with ACME Packet. No SIP gateway; it partners with AudioCodes.

Questions Customers Should Ask Avaya

- What are the costs of implementing changes, and what period of time will be required for a complete return on investment (ROI)?
- Why do I have to upgrade to the most current version to protect my investment?
- Will SIP phones in Aura have all the same features as their legacy phones?
- What happens when I need feature transparency between users from different Communication Manager systems?
- What happens to legacy endpoints in the Session Manager architecture?
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- What do I do with my non-SIP applications?
- Why hasn’t Integrated Messaging Service (IMS) taken off with service providers?
- Will issues related to Enterprise Survivable Servers (ESS), such as downtime and no call preservation, go away with Aura?
- What about my investment in H.323 endpoints?
- What Avaya and third-party application servers can be connected to Avaya’s Session Manager?

Avaya’s Claims Regarding Cisco Session Management Edition

- Cisco doesn’t have a true session manager; they use a PBX disguised as a session manager.
- Cisco can’t do application sequencing.
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager Session Management Edition (SME) can’t register phones.

Why Choose Cisco’s SME?

- SIP technology built into Cisco Unified Communications Manager allows rich feature interaction.
- Cisco Intercompany Media Engine enables business-to-business collaboration.
- Back-to-Back User Agent (B2BUA) is the platform for application integration.
- Cisco SME offers an easy migration path with minimal disruption to unified communications:
  - Multiprotocol support: Customer’s don’t need to upgrade their PBX to interoperate with SME.
  - SME can be used to register phones.
  - Customers can upgrade their Cisco PSTN gateway to Cisco Unified Border Element, with no new hardware required.
- Interoperability
  - Tested with different PBX systems
  - Supports open standards

Aura Session Manager Weaknesses

- Interoperability features are limited to SIP load balancing and SIP header manipulation
- No SBC in the portfolio, forcing Avaya to partner with Acme Packet for SIP trunk security and rich interoperability
- No high availability for midcall failures (Avaya does offer redundancy for new call setups)
- Extremely basic call admission control capabilities
- No feature parity between SIP and legacy (H.323 and digital) phones

Cisco’s SME vs. Avaya Session Manager

Table 1 shows a feature comparison of Cisco’s SME vs. Avaya’s Session Manager.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value Proposition</th>
<th>Cisco</th>
<th>Avaya</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interoperability Features</td>
<td>SIP support</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H.323 support</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TDM support (inc QSIG)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcoding (G11, G729 etc)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DTMF Interop (in-out of band)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application and User Enablement</td>
<td>External Call Control via HTTP</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intercompany 522</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Integration and Provisioning</td>
<td>Dynamic Call Admission (RSVP)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why Cisco?

- Cisco is strong in unified communications and collaboration.
- Cisco provides end-to-end service, while Avaya is dependent on partners for SBC.
- Cisco can offer a single, integrated platform.
- Cisco offers an easy path to migration with minimal disruption to unified communications
- Cisco supports multiple protocols.