

HOSTED CONTACT CENTER MARKET Competitive Profile of Echopass Corporation



A Frost & Sullivan White Paper
Prepared for Echopass



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The adoption of hosted contact centers by Enterprise customers has steadily been on the rise over the last few years, as more and more enterprises have successfully completed pilot projects, and started rolling out the deployment to the rest of the customer service, support, or sales centers within their organizations. As a result, it is now common to see hosted deployments of hundreds of seats, distributed across multiple call center locations.

Section 1 of this document compares Echopass, a leading provider of hosted contact center solutions to Enterprise customers, with some of its competitors in the hosted contact center market. The comparison is based on competitive benchmarking research conducted by Frost & Sullivan during the first quarter of 2008. During this period we assessed Echopass' solution offering and other elements of its business. We then drew comparisons to a number of solution providers in the industry that focus on the Enterprise market.

Section 2 of this paper presents three customer service case studies of Enterprise customers that have deployed hosted contact center solutions. It discusses the business needs and challenges faced by the companies, and how a hosted solution deployed by their solution provider Echopass solved their business problems and transformed their customer service operations.

The deployments discussed in this document were implemented by Echopass and each customer was interviewed by a senior analyst at Frost & Sullivan for the development of this paper. The case studies highlight why the companies selected Echopass as the vendor-of-choice for their hosted contact center services deployment.

SECTION I – COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS OF ECHOPASS

The hosted contact center market is served by a number of solution providers, including the traditional contact center infrastructure vendors, telecommunications companies, outsourcers, and niche hosted service providers. Echopass is one of the very few companies in that mix that is both fully focused on, and has an integrated solution built from ground up for, Enterprise-class clients.

To discuss Echopass' key strengths, we have created comparisons with four other prominent contact center solution providers, as it pertains to their hosted contact center business serving the Enterprise customer.

* Hosted Contact Center – Enterprise Market	Aspect Software	Avaya	Cisco	Verizon Business	Echopass
Company Vision and Focus	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○
Responsiveness to Customer Needs	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○
Agility and Time to Value	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○
Product Strategy	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○	●●●●○
End-to-end Solution Value Proposition & SLA	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○
Organizational Alignment	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●○○	●●●●○	●●●●○

Scores on a 5-point scale: ○ = 0, ◐ = 0.25, ◑ = 0.50, ◒ = 0.75, ● = 1.

Source: Frost & Sullivan

Note: These scores are based on benchmarking research conducted by Frost & Sullivan in March 2008, where we assessed Echopass' solution offering and other elements of its business, compared to a number of solution providers in the industry, for the hosted contact center – Enterprise market. We have shown how Echopass stacks up against Aspect Software, Avaya, Cisco, and Verizon Business in this market in a sub-set of the benchmarking framework.

Frost & Sullivan recognizes Echopass' strengths in the following areas:

I. Company vision and focus:

Echopass as a company is 100% focused on providing hosted contact center solutions to Enterprise customers. Frost & Sullivan recognizes that the needs of Enterprise customers are quite different from those of small and medium size businesses for a hosted contact center solution. While small and medium size businesses seek out hosted solutions that are mainly low cost, easy to deploy, and have basic feature-sets and functionality requiring little or no customization, Enterprise customers need much more robust, secure, scalable, reliable, customizable solutions with 24x7 support.

Echopass' solution and business fabric are built around these stringent Enterprise requirements and the company is fully focused on serving this customer segment.

Frost & Sullivan

2. Responsiveness to customer needs, agility, and accelerated time-to-value:

As evidenced by the case studies discussed in this paper, Echopass has clearly demonstrated its commitment to building a world-class support organization dedicated to assisting its clients during the discovery, implementation and post-sale phases. Based on a number of reference-able client interviews, Frost & Sullivan believes that Echopass has proven its ability to accelerate 'time-to-value' for its hosted and largely customized Enterprise engagements. There are a number of client benefits that accrue from Echopass' delivery of time-to-value. They include:

- On-time and on-budget installations/deployments that map to critical business processes
- Deployment and "go-live" of the service within 60 – 90 days
- Delivering on contract Service Level Agreements (SLA) and Quality of Service (QoS) metrics while providing superior help desk support and technical assistance
- Commitment to compliance programs and certifications such as SAS70 that align with industry-recognized quality standards to promote continuous improvement, security, privacy, and business value for customers

3. Product strategy:

Echopass offers an Enterprise-class, end-to-end hosted contact center solution. Echopass applications sit on top of its underlying platform, which has Genesys call routing and Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) at its core, combined with other best-of-breed partner components. Echopass' intellectual property is built on top of Microsoft® .NET Framework and Windows. The company recognizes that Enterprise customers have unique and complex needs, and in order to provide them with a custom-fit solution, Echopass works with a number of partners to integrate their technologies and services, then delivers these components on-demand along with Echopass' applications, thus providing customers a complete, customizable, fully-managed service.

4. End-to-end integrated solution backed by Service Level Agreements (SLA):

A typical customer deployment could feature a full suite of contact center applications including inbound call routing, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), outbound contact, multimedia contact (voice, email fax and chat), workforce management, quality monitoring, reporting and analytics, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) integration and other customer-specific integrations. Echopass Service Level Agreements guarantee the entire end-to-end platform availability, 24x7 customer support, performance and reliability, including partner components service and carrier services provided by Echopass.

Frost & Sullivan believes that this end-to-end solution value proposition is very attractive for Enterprise customers, and is a key competitive differentiator for Echopass in the hosted contact center market.

5. Organizational alignment and focus on the Enterprise:

Echopass has carved out a well-differentiated position for itself in a crowded competitive landscape featuring companies ranging from the traditional contact center infrastructure vendors, telecommunications companies, outsourcers, and niche hosted and managed service providers. On one hand, most of its larger competitors have several product and service offerings marketed to a wide spectrum of customer segments; on the other hand, most of its smaller competitors target the Small and Medium Business (SMB) market.

This gives Echopass the opportunity to direct all of its resources to serving its target market, which is the hosted contact center – Enterprise market. Its sales, marketing, product, service, and partner organizations are built ground up to serve this Enterprise market customer segment, and have remained agile, flexible, and closely aligned with market dynamics and customer needs.

Echopass' leadership and management team is comprised of seasoned executives with rich and deep domain experience in both contact centers and hosting operations. The company, founded in 2000, is backed by highly reputed investors including New Enterprise Associates (NEA) and Canaan Partners.

SECTION 2 – CUSTOMER CASE STUDIES

Case Study I – American Express Incentive Services (AEIS)

INCENTIVE SERVICES



Background

American Express Incentive Services (AEIS) was founded in 1997 as a joint venture between American Express and Maritz Inc. and maintains relationships with 76% of the Fortune 100 U.S. companies. The company is a market leader in business-to-business prepaid products that offer reward solutions for corporate incentive and consumer promotions programs. AEIS clients use a wide selection of prepaid cards as well as American Express® Gift Cheques, Travelers Cheques, and Gift Cards for programs such as employee recognition, sales incentives, dealer/distributor incentives, loyalty initiatives, promotions, and rebates. Contact center agents take inbound sales and service calls in addition to making outbound telemarketing and account management calls.

Client Challenges

AEIS had set up two separate call center campuses. The first was in St. Louis, operated by parent companies American Express and Maritz. With projected high growth in cardholders and traffic volumes, AEIS had outgrown its existing premise-based Avaya

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) unit. In addition, there were other issues in this center to be addressed:

- The older PBX system was becoming harder to maintain.
- The switch did not have the latest features/functionality.
- The IVR needed an upgrade to keep pace with call volumes and new scripting.
- Call transfers between centers were not cost effective, and the voice quality was not acceptable – voice quality is critical to AEIS.

The much larger second contact center was owned and operated by customer service outsourcer eTelecare in Manila. Managing and sharing resources across these two centers had become difficult and resulted in inefficient staffing levels. Meaningful call volume data and real-time agent reporting were virtually non-existent. AEIS also lacked visibility into agent performance. The centers were in dire need of the latest call recording, measurement and monitoring capabilities. Daily routing changes and routine staffing additions to both systems were tedious and time-consuming. Both centers needed centralized control, management and visibility. One of the most significant challenges was the need to pass a rigorous internal American Express corporate security audit.

The situation outlined above is fairly representative of current contact center environments within Enterprise business units and departments. These organizations often are anxious to replace legacy Y2K-era contact center hardware. While ever-mindful of privacy and data security issues, enterprises are increasingly looking to leading-edge hosted solutions to provide the flexibility, feature-richness, control and ease of use necessary to properly manage today's fast-paced centers.

Echopass Solution

With the long list of technical requirements taken into consideration, AEIS made a strategic decision to select the Echopass Contact Center On-Demand solution suite, given its many robust capabilities. Chief among them were:

- A single-vendor complete solution with on-demand flexibility, and end-to-end support, to respond to seasonal changes
- Minimal IT resource requirements and low up-front investment
- A clear, highly reliable Voice over IP (VoIP) connection between the two locations

“Some companies had some of the things we needed or just partial solutions, but most couldn't do it all. Echopass represented for us, realistically, the most holistic solution that we found,” reflects AEIS Director of Client and Cardholder Services, Regina Greer. In looking back at the selection process, she adds, “Voice quality, the ability to transfer calls between our centers to best serve our customers, reporting capabilities, and cost savings were very important to us.”

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*- Regina Greer
Technical Manager
AEIS*

Greer points to two major factors that drew her company to choose the Echopass hosted solution. First, was the ease with which AEIS could manage agents in both locations with call monitoring and recording for quality assurance. The second factor that made Echopass the most viable option for AEIS was Echopass' ability to pass a mandatory 400-page corporate security audit. Echopass successfully passed the rigorous audit on the first attempt - to date, the only vendor to do so. Without this, the move to a hosted solution would have been a "no go."

According to AEIS' Vice President of IT, John Rose, Echopass stood out against the competition in the following key areas:

1. Speed of deployment (meeting all of the implementation timelines)
2. Rich reporting capabilities
3. System-wide visibility into agent performance
4. Integration with existing CRM, saving costs and gaining efficiencies
5. World-class end-to-end customer support
6. Security and SAS70 certification

Rose adds, "My experience with some vendors is that once the sale is done they tend to disappear. Echopass has been very proactive in maintaining and nurturing the relationship as a *partner* with stakes in the game. They get very high marks for responsiveness on an on-going basis. Clearly, our success was very important to them, as it was to us."

Results

The charter for AEIS is to deliver exceptional customer service, including non-agent interactions handled in the IVR. The hosted solution from Echopass enabled AEIS to meet the following goals:

- Meet its internal Service Level Agreement (SLA) of completing 85% of calls in the IVR
- Timely deployment of the solution with virtually no disruption to the business
- Routing of calls to the right agent, quickly and efficiently
- Cost effective Voice over IP (VoIP) connectivity between St. Louis and Manila – eliminating long distance charges
- Security audit approval to ensure adequate protection of sensitive customer financial information
- Dramatically improved real-time agent reporting
- Comprehensive call management features and capabilities for a global view of agent performance in both centers

AEIS IT team member Mike Reeves notes, "From start to finish, it only takes one hour to train the agents on the Echopass system. It's great...very fast. As far as adding agents, modifying skills, unlocking accounts, and changing passwords, the system gives a lot of

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Vice President of IT
AEIS

capability to the administrator without calling the help desk. The reporting solutions offer me great flexibility in constructing reports and subscribing to them, so they are auto-generated for our people.”

Case Study II – Overstock.com



Background

Online retailer, Overstock.com is located in Salt Lake City, Utah, offering discount prices on name-brand merchandise. Heralded as a customer-centric company with friendly sales reps available 24x7, Overstock.com has quickly become the on-line leader of discounted merchandise sales in a market valued at \$60 billion in the United States. Overstock gives its customers an opportunity to shop for bargains conveniently, while offering manufacturers, distributors and other retailers an alternative sales channel for liquidating their inventory.

The numbers of products Overstock.com offers has grown from less than 100 in 1999, to more than 63,000 non-BMMG (Books, Music, Movies, and Interactive Games) products and over 720,000 BMMG products. At a price point unheard of in the retail industry, normal shipping is only \$2.95, no matter the size or quantity of the products ordered.

Client Challenges

In 2007 it became clear that customer service quality was suffering from the limitations of the premise-based technology Overstock had deployed, as well as the extensive use of an outsourcer. Maintaining the complex call center infrastructure was consuming extensive IT department resources, causing staff to continually operate in a reactive, rather than a customer-centric, proactive mode. “We didn’t have staff with the expertise to continue supporting the technology ourselves, and it would have been difficult and costly to build up the needed staff,” says Carter Lee, Overstock.com’s Vice President of Technology Operations. While maintaining direct control over the agents, Lee and his team were seeking a technology partner to:

- Manage the technology tasks
- Offer a world-class platform with 24/7 customer service
- Guarantee a high level of system availability and reliability through an SLA
- Provide the business flexibility to keep pace with retail sales peaks

Frost & Sullivan research indicates that a key driver to adopting hosted technology is the multi-sourcing of agents. This is a fast-growing trend in contact centers today. Adopting multi-sourcing, the customer service organization of an enterprise can include multiple in-house agent sites, multiple outsourced call centers, branch offices, remote and at-home agents. With traditional premise equipment, the cost of provisioning and integrating these

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disparate environments can be cost prohibitive. This is overcome to a great extent via the hosted model. Multiple sites and agent locations can be provisioned and managed centrally from the service provider's facility with considerable ease.

Echopass Solution

After evaluating the market and checking references in the enterprise space, Lee and team made the decision to engage a hosted, on-demand provider. "Echopass offered a virtual call center built on a solid foundation using best-of-breed technology — including Genesys technology, which we were already familiar with, but in a hosted model," says Lee. "Echopass also provides world class 24x7 customer support and a guaranteed level of high system reliability."

Overstock.com selected Echopass Contact Center On-Demand. Cutover of the Echopass solution was scheduled for early September 2007 — right before the Overstock busy season. Lee made a controversial decision to hire 150 new agents and put them on the system right at the time of cutover along with the 200 agents already employed by Overstock. "It took only 90 days from the day we signed the contract," recalls Lee. "It was one of the smoothest cutovers I had been involved with. One morning we turned it on and began taking calls immediately." Lee cited Echopass' domain and technical expertise as a critical factor in this very successful deployment.

Results

With the Echopass solution solidly in place, Overstock.com has come to realize a number of benefits to the organization including:

- A sharp reduction in abandoned calls - from 8% down to 2%, resulting in a higher number of sales conversions per agent
- Accurate reporting of agent performance, abandoned call percentages and customer service operations
- A focus on coaching and developing agent talent to deliver a superior customer experience
- Significant improvement in speed of answer. Today, 93% of callers reach an agent in less than 60 seconds
- An increase in agent training time and effectiveness through Echopass' monitoring and call recording capabilities.
- A staggering increase in customer loyalty as noted in Net Promoter Score (NPS) — often referred to as the "platinum standard" in customer satisfaction metrics

NPS measures customers' propensity to recommend a company to their friends/family. The overall NPS score that companies look to achieve hovers around 40%. "The overall NPS score for Overstock is now over 70%, way above industry average," as Lee puts it. "We are focused on customer service; we are passionate about customer service and customer loyalty."

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What does the future hold for Overstock? Continued improvements in customer service. The company will soon turn on Echopass screen capture services, and plans to have Echopass tighten the integration with Overstock's RightNow Technologies CRM application. Also in the planning stages are improved call routing based on customer score or call type, as well as new IVR speech self service and queue call-back options. Overstock also plans to add a team of home-based agents, which the Echopass on-demand hosted solution easily supports.

Case Study III - Aon Consulting



Background

Aon Consulting is one of three business units within Aon Corporation, a \$7.4 billion enterprise with 36,000 professionals worldwide. In combination with Aon Consulting and its two other business units Aon Risk Services and Aon Re Global, Aon Corporation is the leading global provider of risk management services, insurance and reinsurance brokerage, and human capital consulting.

Among the services Aon Consulting offers is Employee Benefits Outsourcing (EBO). Aon Consulting takes a consultative approach to benefits and pension outsourcing, ensuring that employees have easy access to information about their benefits plans and are given every opportunity to understand those plans and the total rewards they are receiving from their employers. For its clients, Aon Consulting is shaping the future through benefits, talent management, and rewards strategies and solutions.

A Unique Challenge and Business Opportunity

Providing fast, knowledgeable, friendly, and effective communication between Aon Consulting's client representatives and its clients is a core competency and a core commitment to those clients. Aon Consulting's EBO team includes two participant contact service centers; one in Winston Salem, N.C. and the second in Rolling Meadows, IL, with an average staff size of 100 representatives in each location. During peak enrollment season the client representative count can climb to 300 or more. Representatives in each site perform a myriad of complex duties for assigned benefits, flexible spending plans and COBRA administration.

Client calls to Aon Consulting's participant service center are a far cry from the standard transaction, retail order or bill payment call type. The client conversations are of longer duration, more complex and highly consultative. These types of interactions become advisory in nature and often center around sensitive health, insurance or medical issues.

This puts Aon Consulting squarely in a unique position of being in the contact center-as-a-service business. As a critical customer entry point, Aon Consulting's service center

does not serve simply as a delivery channel or an enhancement. This ‘moment of truth’ is part and parcel of Aon Consulting’s core product – namely the expert consultation between Aon Consulting’s client representatives and the employees of its clients.

Ken Haderer, Aon Consulting’s Executive Vice-President for Employee Benefit Outsourcing, notes, “When we looked at the business opportunity, we evaluated all of the components of our delivery model. The participant service center is where we drive individual employee delight and that cumulatively adds up to client satisfaction, retention and renewal. It’s no secret in our business how important those interactions are. We had to identify opportunities on the technology side of our call center infrastructure to enhance, expand and create even more robust capabilities than we currently had, in order to be more effective for our clients in the next 3-5 years and into the future.”

The Aon Consulting team decided that the best way to accomplish this goal was to focus on its core competency of delivering outstanding service to its clients, while leveraging the core competencies of a contact center technology and infrastructure partner. This way, the company could marry a partner’s solution with its participant services people/processes/technology capabilities in order to meet future growth projections for the business. Haderer comments, “Providing value to our clients is our first priority. We wanted to make sure that our infrastructure was absolutely going to be ready and ahead of our client needs.”

Aon Consulting’s Global CIO, Ash Patel adds, “From an IT perspective this is strategic for us, it wasn’t about efficiencies, or the cost of a technology refresh. It was about leveraging technology to serve clients’ requirements and to gain competitive advantage; a continuous improvement that would allow us to better serve and partner with our clients. We wanted to create the infrastructure that would allow us to exercise agility and speed so that we could be even more successful in consultative services. We have more stringent [regulatory] requirements than most because of the confidentiality of health information and amongst other requirements, the enhanced capability for 100% call recording of everything we do.”

The Solution and the Partnership

Added to the demands of a highly technical and extensive 30-page RFP was Aon Consulting’s requirement for an on-site product demonstration. “We had numerous companies come to our facilities, demonstrate their tools and build something out to meet our specifications ‘on the fly’ - live and in-person,” says Daron Staton, Aon Consulting’s VP of Human Resource Outsourcing, who is located in the Winston Salem contact center. “Echopass was the *only* company with the processes and capability to meet our required thresholds.”

Recognizing the unique nature of its business model, Aon Consulting’s final partnership selection process was equally distinctive. Patel recalls, “We didn’t want to partner with a

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Global CIO
Aon Consulting

firm that was seen as transactional. For some of the companies we considered, on-demand contact centers were only a portion of their business. With Echopass this is their core competency. It's their sole business focus, and as a result, we'd have their full attention and commitment."

To drive home this point even further, Haderer comments, "From an overall business perspective, after all the criteria were met by Echopass, we were looking for a firm that understood its place in its industry—where it's been and where it's going and what it means to continuously improve. We wanted to be sure that they had the same philosophical approaches to their markets; similar in size, scale and capability to what we do, so that we could operate as true partners, not just another number in other things that they service. The firm's business model was an extremely important part of this evaluation. With Echopass, we know their investment dollars are targeted right into the solutions we require to meet our client's requirements."

Finally, Staton adds "We wanted a partner that not only had the flexibility to meet our current needs, but one that would help us grow and meet future objectives. This included a work-at-home capability. We were looking for a company with a long-term commitment to hosted call center solutions. We needed to make it clear to our clients that we were partnering with a recognized, credible leader in the industry. We saw all of this in Echopass; this was key for us."

The Results

With all of the technical requirements met, it is of interest to note that Echopass was also able to deliver on Aon Consulting's aggressive 60-day implementation timeline. Competitive vendors could only commit to a schedule that was three times the length, or offered scope projections that did not meet Aon Consulting's requirements.

Speaking to on-time delivery and budgetary considerations, Haderer concludes, "We were successful managing this together: Aon Consulting and Echopass. One of the most important elements of this deployment was that it was timed to be in and working effectively within one of the busiest cyclical periods when our clients would need us most. In order to maintain that expectation and deliverable, the team had to really partner through some extensive transformation changes. We're very pleased with that."

Looking back on the system implementation Staton adds, "Echopass was able to provide consistent and common routing strategies through their technology. The Echopass solution allowed us to move away from maintaining the older legacy platform and leverage what Echopass had to offer. The Echopass partnership that we forged has really enabled us to capitalize on industry-leading technology, call routing and reporting that we previously did not have. Also, we can perform 90% of changes we require without Echopass' intervention."

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Aon Consulting

Finally, the agility of the Echopass platform and infrastructure to be able to expand as Aon Consulting has added clients, has proven to be extremely cost-effective in enabling Aon Consulting's business and technology staff to focus on what's important for their clients – service- as the organization continues on the trajectory to rapid growth.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In summary, Echopass differentiates itself by virtue of a singular focus on providing hosted contact center solutions to Enterprise customers, and delivering on its promises, which include accelerated time-to-value, and exceptional customer service and support. The Echopass solution brings to bear the benefits of a customizable, scalable on-demand contact center built on enterprise-class platform architecture, with an "always on" guarantee, and delivered as an end-to-end managed, hosted service, all backed by a comprehensive Service Level Agreement (SLA).

Frost & Sullivan believes that Echopass' robust solution, loyal and referenceable customers, and its ability to leverage deep domain expertise and continue product enhancements will be instrumental factors in solidifying its competitive position, today and tomorrow, in the North American hosted contact center market.

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