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MWA intelligence

June 2007: Recently I had the good fortune to visit the US headquarters of MWA intelligence (MWAi) and spend a full day meeting teams of engineers, its marketing personnel, sales executives and its president and CEO Mike Stramaglio.

Finding its Wings

Over the last year while I have been asking the executives at this fledgling company to describe their product and where it fits in the office equipment industry, the industry started paying a lot more attention on remote “diagnostics”. For the sake of this digest “remote diagnostics” is a methodology where devices on a network (or standalone in some cases) can be monitored with minimal human intervention and cost. Usually remote diagnostics fits into the analytical and collaborative element of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) since it’s a form of direct communication with customers that does not include a company’s sales or service representative and analyses the customer’s data for a broad range of purposes. And so it appears that the market has come to the doorstep of **MWAi** who has an number of turnkey solutions that truly are remote monitoring.

With the office equipment industry and enterprises relying more on hardware and channel efficiencies and less on hardware margins, resellers are trying to achieve the highest possible level of service profitability with an efficient service department. Therefore any “solution” offering that lends itself to machine-to-machine communications with minimal human intervention is certainly worth looking into. And so I have to admit that MWAi is well positioned today in providing cutting-edge machine-to-machine (**M2M**) solutions and tools that support the exchange of real-time information between hardware, mobile workers, back-office management and key decision makers in mission-critical departments. MWAi looks like it has found its wings and is ready to soar

What is M2M?

Basically M2M stands for: having the ability for a device or machine to talk to one other. Simple huh? Well it's a little more than that but since it's an emerging market made up of a wide diversity in technology, its core competency can be defined as customer data monitoring in order to provide more efficient service. In our case, M2M technology changes how a user will interact with their office equipment and employees as it's virtually transparent. And being transparent may alter the relationship between businesses. Because of its transparency within the enterprise, users of M2M, however, still measure service as the "ability to keep the greatest amount of uptime on devices" within its installed base. Specifically, the more a customer utilizes a device – MFP, printer, facsimile, etc. without interruption or failure, the better-off he/she will be and a better chance the servicing entity has retaining them as their customer. All thanks to M2M communications.

As M2M gains in popularity, enterprises that employ such technology are going to seek new partnerships between business-to-business and business-to-consumer in order to leverage the data and analytical summaries they generate. And office equipment resellers utilizing some of MWAi solutions might just be the recipient of the windfall. Since office equipment resellers who employ M2M technology will find that productivity, efficiencies and profitability are enhanced with the most accurate data in real time, experience less errors in billing, have zero customer intervention and have the knowledge in real time as to what is happening within their installed base.

At Home in the Desert

We saw first-hand at MWAi's Scottsdale, Arizona headquarters an efficient organization managing an intuitive system that monitors tens of thousands of service technicians and ten million meters on devices. Suspended on a wall within the technical support group was a large screen monitor showing the various hubs, servers and grids of the sites and personnel MWAi was monitoring. If a service alert occurs, the monitor comes alive and alerts MWAi about the location and then directs the operator down into the details of the account and the nature of the alert. A team of seasoned engineers/technical support staff demonstrated how machine to machine monitoring can result in a rapid response and resolution, many times without the knowledge of the account. It demonstrates how a majority of service alerts can be resolved without generating an unnecessary service call or site visit.

In just one year after its spin off from EFI, MWAi now has a platform independent approach to delivering remote asset management tools for office equipment dealers in a number of turnkey packages, leveraging **Automated Dispatch Systems, Inc. (ADS)** that was purchased by EFI and spun off into MWAi and **Imaging Portals** which was acquired in September 2006. These two acquisitions give MWAi the scalable ability to intelligently employ true remote diagnostics and implement a true Machine-2-Machine solution across an entire enterprise.

MWAI Deliverables

Of course the essence of the visit was to learn more about the solutions and what deliverables were available to office equipment dealers, resellers and manufacturers. MWAI's M2M solutions are divided into "**Intelligent Assets™**" and "**Intelligent Service™**".

Intelligent Assets has two component; **Meter Auditing™** and **Intelligent Device Management™**.

Meter Auditing™ is meter audit software pre-packaged in a memory stick and is deployed across a network to affect an automated discovery on the entire network or just a specific segment. All relevant data, including meter readings and even consumables levels are captured and reported back to the memory stick and saved in a simple file.

Intelligent Device Management™ on the other hand, consists of several elements starting with automated meter reading capability that provides accurate real time meter reads for accurate billing followed by service call creation that eliminates the manual process of dispatching a service technician. And then an automated consumable replacement feature that removes the customer from the re-order cycle and better manages the device by eliminating the need to stockpile toner at the customer site. In March they added the DC-Mesh module that utilized a routing algorithm for the collection of data from unconnected devices that is aggregated through MWAI's network software.

Intelligent Services™ also has two elements; **Intelligent Service Management™** and **Intelligent Workforce™**

Intelligent Service Management™ offers a robust suite of solutions for the dealer managing technicians in the field and those dispatching them. Starting with the capability of knowing the current status of one's service workforce with the ability to map and intelligently route the technical staff and balance workloads while providing a graphic display of the pending cases, makes this an invaluable tool for any copier dealer.

Along with the aforementioned, Intelligent Service Features can direct calls on pre-established priorities, issue alerts for credit hold and even process backorder status reports and historical reporting.

And to cover the mobile service force MWAI has Intelligent Workforce™ which allows a service technician to employ a number of mobile device technologies, Blackberries, Pocket PCs, laptops, PDA's etc, to receive and transmit information to initiate or conclude a service call. This software gives the technician the capability to receive and review virtually all the data pertaining to a particular customer and the dealerships, such as parts availability, manuals, parts list, etc.

Early Adaptors

Since January 2007, MWAI has put together an impressive list of clients that have found its platform independence the way to go if the servicing agent is responsible for every device on a network. In January they added **Océ's Business Products Centers group** of the Corporate Printing Division of Océ North America which selected Intelligent Device Management™. In the same month they announced an agreement with **Toshiba America Business Solutions**

who will utilize Intelligent Services™ to enhance the company's service and support activities.

In March MWAi entered into a cross licensing agreement with **PrintFleet** who receives the right to License MWAi's patent portfolio while both will collaborate engineering efforts in areas of vendor support. Also in March MWAi was selected as a preferred vendor with **International Business Products**, Inc a buying consortium in the US office equipment market.

In April MWAi established a relationship to jointly market MWAi's remote asset management tools and service automation by leveraging **Muratec** co-op dollars and giving Muratec dealers the ability to improve customer productivity and operational efficiencies.

And in June MWAi announced an agreement with **Katun** whereby Katun would offer MWAi's Intelligent Service™ module as a component of Katun's Customer Solutions Program.

My Two Cents Worth

Well, if you stuck it out this far you definitely are interested in the strategy of remote diagnostics and MWAi. First I have been involved with remote diagnostics on both sides, as a consultant and as a director of product development for a copier manufacturer years ago. Some companies today are still talking about remote diagnostics as a one-dimensional metering solution or data in an Excel sheet format. There are no dynamics to these deliverable that are being designed offshore by engineers who don't understand how US business customers (dealers) have invested in ineffective and underutilized technology in the past and no longer care to buy the latest device. What dealers want is technology that is strategic in nature and gives them a competitive advantage. Capturing a single vender's meter count on a network is not an advantage, which brings me to MWAi.

I have to admit that I was very impressed by a number of milestones that MWAi has achieved. First they have a scalable, definable deliverable that provides a dealer a competitive advantage. Go to there web site and read some of the dealer testimonials. If he/she carries more then one manufacturer's line of devices then they should be talking to MWAi. And manufacturers should take the time to learn what an embedded MWAi solution would do for efficiency, productivity and time to market. Why try to re-invent a solution that someone else seems to understand quite well? MWAi appears to understand how remote asset management is achievable, and the technical benefits that a dealer can derive. MWAi is not distracted by feeds and speeds of the traditional copier / printer but focused solely on providing the best possible asset management tools across an enterprise. They have the patents, they have very capable and focused people and they have a burning ambition to get their technology into as many hands a possible.

Bob Sostilio