

REPORT REPRINT

CA Technologies advances vision of unified monitoring and analytics platform

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The company has been investing in new technologies that support its plans to deliver SaaS monitoring products and offer customers the ability to unify and analyze IT operations data.

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We attended CA World 2017 in Las Vegas for an update on the vendor's product roadmap and the chance to hear from customers. We saw good progress from CA Technologies with regard to its plans to modernize its monitoring suite of products, and talked to customers who largely saw promise in CA's direction.

THE 451 TAKE

If CA World 2016 was an effort at laying out a grand vision for the future of monitoring and analytics, CA World 2017 was an opportunity to show off good progress toward achieving that vision. While CA somewhat missed that opportunity, opting to deliver largely conceptual keynote addresses instead of focusing on its execution progress, attendees who spent time on the show floor might have been able to gather an understanding of what's now available to them - specifically, the services that CA now delivers in its Digital Experience Insights offering. This platform, as well as others in its monitoring business, move CA away from the category of legacy vendor and into the category of modern vendor. Whether it can convince the market to see it that way is another story, but CA continues to hammer away at messaging and capabilities that should appeal to the developer set - a crucial customer base that it needs to win over if it wants to be regarded as a vendor that offers modern tools.

PRODUCTS

CA has a dizzying array of names for products and product groupings, but customers that manage to navigate the branding maze will discover an integrated set of monitoring products, with increasingly advanced analytics capabilities coming on the near horizon.

We're focusing here on CA's SaaS monitoring products, which currently serve a relatively small portion of CA's customer base but cater to the needs of organizations embracing modern technologies and approaches, and that compete against new-breed vendors - CA needs these new SaaS offerings to remain relevant. CA's Digital Experience Insights comprises three CA products: APM for application monitoring, Infrastructure Management for server and infrastructure monitoring, and App Experience Analytics for advanced real-user monitoring. Customers can buy each product separately, but using them together as part of Digital Experience Insights delivers valuable integrations. For instance, a Digital Experience Insights user might detect, via the App Experience Analytics interface, that end users in a certain region are experiencing slowness when accessing an application. They can begin to drill down, and from within the same interface see application and infrastructure insight related to the slowness. End users can similarly first notice a problem within APM or Infrastructure Management, and track the problem through to the user experience.

The integrations should prove useful to customers that are troubleshooting problems. Such customers are likely to value having a single integrated tool that professionals from different teams, including operations, DevOps and product management, can use as a source of information about both back-end performance and user experience. Next up will be to add synthetic monitoring to Digital Experience Insights, and CA's network monitoring products will follow, bringing opportunity for additional insight for customers via integrations across the products.

CA also showed off API monitoring via Runscope, the API testing and monitoring vendor it acquired in September. While Runscope has been used in both testing and monitoring environments, CA plans to leave API testing to BlazeMeter, which has a more sophisticated offering, and expects to integrate Runscope's technology with CA's APM tools.

The integrations that CA showed off as part of Digital Experience Insights are useful, but the real endgame has been a system that harnesses machine learning to analyze data from a variety of sources, including CA's many monitoring products (and third-party tools in the future) for anomaly detection and predictive analytics. At the conference, CA offered a sneak peak of its Digital Operational Intelligence product, which it says will be available soon. It also announced version 2.0 of Mainframe Operational Intelligence, a similar product but one designed specifically for mainframes. Digital Operational Intelligence represents a forward-thinking product, and we think CA could have done more at CA World and online to communicate its existence and value to customers.

Digital Operational Intelligence is enabled by the big-data analytics engine that CA calls Jarvis, which it began talking about roughly a year ago. The products that make up Digital Experience Insights all now run on Jarvis. While CA continues to build out and promote Jarvis, we think it could be more aggressive here. At CA World 2016, we first bumped into CA customers who said that they were interested in buying Jarvis as a big-data back end that they could use to run a variety of applications, not just the IT ops use case that CA first developed it for. This year, a CA representative on the show floor told us that the company continued to see strong interest in Jarvis as a stand-alone product and that it had begun running a very small beta program, via a SaaS deployment of Jarvis, to test the concept. However, given that the company has seen strong interest, it appears to be missing an opportunity to test the concept with more customers and further pursue the stand-alone Jarvis opportunity.

CA ACCELERATOR

CA has two monitoring products in development in its CA Accelerator incubator program. Both had a presence on the CA World show floor, although only one appeared to have a demo, and that was for FreshTracks.io. The service is built on Kubernetes and Prometheus, and is targeted at container users. FreshTracks has a novel UI that allows users to quickly see which containers are no longer running and to understand their relationship to potential performance problems. It also harnesses machine-learning technologies to help surface valuable insight for users. We think that CA can serve cutting-edge customers with a service like FreshTracks, although we anticipate potential challenges for CA in terms of integrating FreshTracks with other CA tools, given that FreshTracks is built on Prometheus while CA's other monitoring tools are transitioning to run on Jarvis.

CA also has a monitoring project under development called Kaizenops.io. The idea is to deliver a virtual assistant that serves up actionable information about performance problems and how to solve them, and is targeted at the site-reliability engineer role.

COMPETITION

With its integrations across APM, RUM and infrastructure monitoring in a SaaS offering, CA is competitive with new-breed platform-monitoring vendors such as Cisco's AppDynamics, New Relic and Dynatrace. The CA SaaS products should be more attractive to customers of monitoring products from IBM and HPE, which haven't updated their products at the rate CA has to meet customer needs and offer a competitive alternative to the new-breed vendors. BMC's TrueSight family of products represent solid competition to CA's Digital Experience Insights.

Once CA begins commercially offering Digital Operational Intelligence, it will compete with a small but growing set of vendors that are targeting the ITOA 2.0 use case. These vendors include Splunk with IT Service Intelligence, Dexda, SignifAI, FixStream and Anodot. New Relic Insights and AppDynamics Business IQ will also be competitive with CA's Digital Operational Intelligence.

If FreshTracks.io takes off, it will compete with hosted Prometheus offerings from companies such as Weaveworks, as well as vendors that were founded to serve the container use case, including Instana, CoScale and Sysdig.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

CA has a solid base of enterprise customers and a good shot at transitioning with them as they adopt new technologies and approaches.

WEAKNESSES

CA would benefit from both a simpler marketing message around its SaaS monitoring offerings and a more aggressive marketing approach to its unique products, particularly Digital Operational Intelligence and Jarvis when they are ready for general and service availability.

OPPORTUNITIES

CA is on the cutting edge of the competition - particularly its traditional legacy competitors, but it is keeping pace against some of the new-breed vendors, as well - with its big-data back end and associated ITOA 2.0 potential. Given its enterprise customer base, which we think would be most interested in this type of platform, we think CA is well positioned to lead the market here.

THREATS

While we think that CA has taken the right steps to appeal to developers and cutting-edge businesses, it has more work to do here and will be threatened by newer vendors that were built specifically for and by this important market.