The Vendors that Matter Series

Waterfield Technologies

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Company Background: Waterfield Technologies

Founded: 1985
Specialty: Software and professional services for Voice, Mobile and Omnichannel customer support

Distinction: Waterfield Technologies offers the Blueworx IVA platform of voice and omnichannel self-service resources and professional services to make it a platform for cost-effective deployment and management of conversational virtual assistants at enterprise scale.

Addressing the Pressure to "Add AI"

The term "Conversational AI" has taken on magical qualities for customer care professionals. It's the special sauce that convert IVR (interactive voice response) systems into IVAs (intelligent virtual agents). It then makes it possible for those virtual agents to greet customers personally, quickly recognize their intents, and then propel them along the happy path to task completion.

Tens of thousands of firms already dabble in Conversational AI with their ranks growing daily. The number of bot and IVA deployments has grown exponentially because any department or marketing initiative can spawn its own bot. As a result, Opus Research sees enterprise spending on Enterprise Intelligent Assistant platforms and services approaching $5 billion by 2023, as multiple vendors offer various solutions across industries.

For many companies, responsibility for developing, training and maintaining these conversational self-service solutions appears haphazard. Its champion may be from IT, digital transformation, contact center operations, mobile app development, or marketing. Without a core platform, many bots and IVAs do not get beyond the "science experiment" stage and effectively built into the critical path of customer care.

Market Challenge: Overcoming the Chaos

A broad variety of solutions providers – too many, by some accounts – offer tools, platforms and APIs to support Conversational AI. They come from an alphabet soup of abbreviated domains that include CCTR (Contact Centers), CPaaS (Communications Platforms as a Service), CRM (Customer Relationship Management) or CCaaS (Contact Center as a Service). As if that weren't enough, their offerings are complemented by a rich marketplace of micoservices that are accessible through APIs or connectors.

Tools are not solutions; APIs are not integrations. The overabundance of options amounts to a significant speed bump on the road to successful Conversational AI deployments. Implementers waste time sorting through marketing hype in order to select the best vendors and partners for building conversational experiences.

EVEN MORE, MOST SOLUTIONS FAIL TO FULFILL ON AI'S PRIME DIRECTIVE: TO SUPPORT A CONVERSATIONAL ENGAGEMENT MODEL THAT RAPIDLY UNDERSTANDS NATURAL LANGUAGE INPUT FROM HUMANS AND RESPONDS WITH CORRECT ANSWERS, CONSISTENTLY AND AT SCALE.
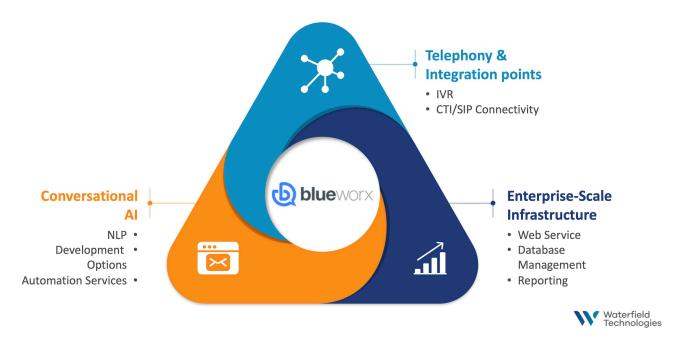
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Today, many companies are left on their own to figure out how to use available tools to build enterprise-grade solutions. Yet, a good number of them (the so-called "early majority") are starting at to identify building blocks that incorporate applied AI for real-world business applications, for example, intelligent routing. Feature and function-wise, answering the phone, detecting its purpose and routing to the right resource is impressive, but it only starts to meet the requirements of the modern contact center.

Waterfield's Solution: The Blueworx IVA Platform

Waterfield enters the chaotic world of Conversational AI ready to arm its clients with the Blueworx IVA Platform. It is a software platform that serves as a one-stop shop for Conversational AI resources.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, Blueworx combines the most desirable aspects of enterprise-grade IVRs, including 24/7/365 availability, web service integration, database connectivity, reporting capabilities, and seamless contact center connectivity though CTI and SIP. Now augmented with Natural Language Processing (NLP), as needed, the Blueworx IVA Platform gives companies a true solution to providing Conversational AI at enterprise scale.

Figure 1: Blueworx IVA Platform's Combined Capabilities

Telephony & Integration points
- IVR
- CTI/SIP Connectivity

Conversational AI
- NLP
- Development Options
- Automation Services

Enterprise-Scale Infrastructure
- Web Service
- Database Management
- Reporting

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The Blueworx IVA Platform provides enterprise-scale mission-critical applications built on an architecture that has been deployed hundreds of times. It is also tightly integrated with contact center systems that AI providers don't have. The robust feature and function sets enables companies to solve the most challenging business functions using the power of AI-driven interactions, but still managing the complexity of running business functions securely.

By complementing existing contact center and IVR architectures, Waterfield has developed and refined real-word intelligent virtual agent (IVA) use cases that include securely authenticating callers, processing payment transactions, retrieving status of claims/orders, and capturing new order information.
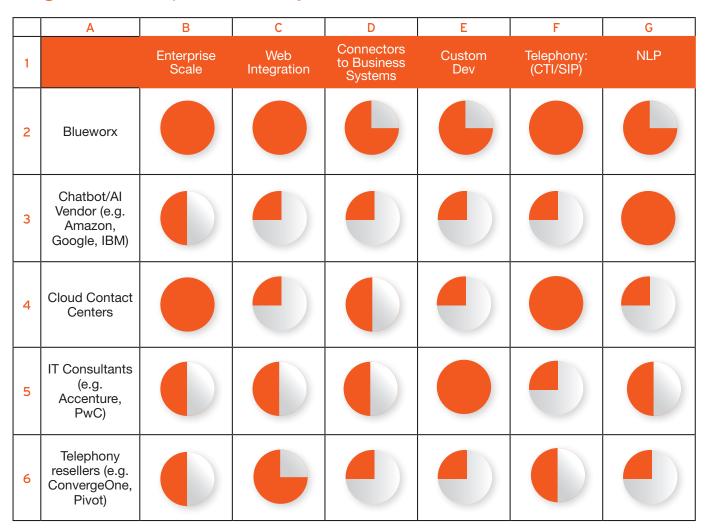
Competitive Analysis Shows Complete Solution

Conversational AI implementations call for tight integration with the contact center and customer business systems to perform real work for callers, and allow seamless escalation to a human agent when that is appropriate. The IVA represents a company's public voice, and needs to present both a professional persona, as well as a meaningful purpose. Most importantly, it needs to resolve customer questions. As illustrated in Figure 2, below, the combination of Waterfield's core skills and IP, with the Blueworx IVA Platform brings a solution set that compares very strongly against alternatives.

Figure 2: Competitive Analysis

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1		Enterprise Scale	Web Integration	Connectors to Business Systems	Custom Dev	Telephony: (CTI/SIP)	NLP
2	Blueworx	● full	● full	◕ ~75%	◕ ~75%	● full	◕ ~75%
3	Chatbot/AI Vendor (e.g. Amazon, Google, IBM)	◐ half	◔ ~25%	◔ ~25%	◔ ~25%	◔ ~25%	● full
4	Cloud Contact Centers	● full	◔ ~25%	◐ half	◔ ~25%	● full	◔ ~25%
5	IT Consultants (e.g. Accenture, PwC)	◐ half	◐ half	◐ half	● full	◔ ~25%	◐ half
6	Telephony resellers (e.g. ConvergeOne, Pivot)	◐ half	◕ ~75%	◐ half	◔ ~25%	◐ half	◔ ~25%

Blueworx provides a platform that features robust telephony/SIP integration capabilities, bringing together the best of the NLP technologies with a platform architecture that supports integration with existing systems (both premises-based or cloud).

Over time, Waterfield has built a strong list of go-to-market contact center partners, including Genesys, Avaya, Cisco, Aspect and more. This provides high levels of flexibility for companies pursuing a "best-of-breed" strategy for the proper implementation of AI across contact centers, self-service, and employee productivity platforms.

By seamlessly integrating with current contact center systems, Waterfield Technologies is well-positioned to enable AI to automate conversations on cloud-based platforms. The current customer base is loyal and has already benefited from 24/7/365 care.

By comparison:

➤ **AI Vendors** – Have impressive NLP toolkits that scale for the enterprise but often leave customer on their own to solve telephony integration or back end systems integration challenges.

➤ **Cloud Contact Centers** (CCaaS) – Developed platforms that provide tools for handling telephony integration, and scale to enterprise demands. They also have connectors or APIs to a variety of cloud-based microservices. However custom integration to other solutions the responsibility of the user. Their services teams do not customarily tackle custom integration challenges, or NLP design/build support.

➤ **IT Consultancies** – Demonstrate strength in business process automation and integration. However they seldom take on the unique challenges of telephony integration or voice user interface design challenges.

➤ **Telephony Resellers** – Specialize in installing and configuring the products they resell. They are less adept at bridging technologies together into a single cohesive solution for enterprise customers that require integration of technologies outside of what they sell. Custom integration, and new NLP technology development, are challenges for these organizations.

Market Scope: Large

The need for solution suites that give enterprise contact center customers the tools to harness elements of AI offered by third parties, like Amazon, Google, Microsoft is global and spans multiple vertical markets.

Market Impact: High/Medium

Waterfield Technologies is familiar with existing self-service resources and will use its experience to accelerate selective and judicious deployment of elements of artificial intelligence. That includes the leveraging of existing investment in contact center and IVR systems, as well as exhibiting judgment, based on experience, surrounding the decision to move from existing, highly-functional automated systems to AI-infused counterparts.

About Opus Research

Opus Research is a diversified advisory and analysis firm providing critical insight on software and services that support multimodal customer care. Opus Research is focused on "Conversational Commerce," the merging of intelligent assistant technologies, conversational intelligence, intelligent authentication, enterprise collaboration and digital commerce.

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