



Highlights from Services Leadership 2007: Collaboration and Community in New Orleans

By Stephen Smith, Executive Director, SSPA

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For those of you who had the opportunity to join us for SSPA's preeminent leadership conference in New Orleans this month—I'd like to thank you for making it such a meaningful event. For those of you who couldn't attend, we hope that you will talk to your colleagues and peers from around the globe and learn first-hand why SSPA conferences are generating so much buzz in the industry.

Services Leadership 2007 was my second SSPA conference in my role as the new Executive Director for the Association that has been guiding the service and support industry for the last twenty years. After attending many thought-provoking sessions and talking with attendees from companies large and small, it was again made clear to me that now more than ever our industry is on the brink of major transformation that will last well into the next decade. It is the participants, speakers and partners at these conferences who are driving this vision—transitioning away from the break/fix support model and spearheading Value-Added SupportSM to create breakthrough customer success across our industry.

Leaders, Innovators and Real-world Solutions

"The terms 'Breakthrough customer success' and 'Value-Added Support' aren't just marketing jargon. These are concepts—and active, current support models—that are shaping how services are delivered. I attended some fantastic sessions from Oracle, BEA and CA and witnessed the future of support." - Services Leadership 2007 Attendee, October 2, 2007

Conference participants were vocal about their enthusiasm for the line-up of speakers, abundant networking opportunities and innovative technology demonstrations. But it was the progressive theme of the event coupled with real-world case studies on integrating tangible value into technology support models that had me truly excited. What's more, is that the SSPA has made a point of underscoring and recognizing excellence and innovation in the midst of its nearly 200 member

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companies.

SSPA is committed to fostering best practices, enabling success amongst our members and leading the industry with forward-looking content and programs.

But how do we recognize leadership and innovation in our member companies? SSPA industry recognition takes shape in several forms—from organizational recognition and certification programs such as the highly-regarded *Excellence in Service Operations* and *J.D. Power and Associates Certification*, to the time-honored *SSPA STAR Awards for Service Excellence* and popular *SSPA Recognized Innovators*—we have a respected recognition program applicable to many types and stages of industry leadership.

Before I re-cap this year's STAR Award winners and Recognized Innovators, I'd like to pay special tribute to one company that has garnered an award so unique and distinctive that it deserves a singular tribute. This company is being presented with SSPA's first ever *Services Industry Leadership Award* recognizing significant and sustained contributions to the technology service & support community for over 10 years:

- SSPA Member since 1994
- 6 Years of continuous SSPA Advisory Board service
- CTSS Standards Board leadership and contributions
- 18 months of intern resources provided to SSPA
- Thought leadership in services research and innovation
- Government lobbying on behalf of technology services
- Dozens of SSPA conference presentations
- Ongoing SSPA committee participation and leadership
- Winner of 11 SSPA STAR Awards
- J.D. Power and Associates & ESO Certified

SSPA's *Services Industry Leadership Award* was accepted by Juan Jones, Senior Vice President, Oracle Support Services North America, on behalf of Oracle and all of their support staff. Congratulations Oracle—and thank you for your many contributions to the industry!

Now I'd like to point out the industry leaders in two different award categories—SSPA STAR Awards for Service Excellence and SSPA Recognized Innovators. I'll start with the SSPA Recognized Innovators which were announced on Monday October 1st by SSPA's VP of Research John Ragsdale, who later led tours of the winning technology solution vendors in the Technology Services Expo. The SSPA Recognized Innovator awards rate applicants in three categories—Innovation in Globalization, Innovation in Interaction Quality and Innovation in Proactive Support—and for each applicant, a select group of judges determines whether the technology solutions are innovative, unique and exemplary of the category. Winners are selected by a panel

of SSPA members and industry insiders. This year the winners include:

Recognized Innovators for Globalization

The winner in this category, *RightNow Technologies* delivers OnDemand CRM and eService solutions. *InQuira*, which has expanded their suite beyond Web self-service and intelligent search to include multi-channel interaction support and a fully integrated discussion forum, was a finalist.

Recognized Innovators for Interaction Quality

The winner in this category, *Verint*, offers a new suite of quality monitoring, TDM and IP recording, speech and data analytics, performance management, workforce management, eLearning, customer feedback management, as well as a full range of support, professional, and consulting services. *Citrix Online* was a finalist with their full suite of remote support tools.

Recognized Innovators for Proactive Support

With top vote-getters only one point apart, there were two finalists in this category.

NextNine, the winner of this category, is the only provider of self-healing, remote monitoring and diagnostics, secure remote support, and software distribution specifically designed for external customer technical support. *Clarabridge*, a finalist in this category, blends a number of technologies that enable it to transform text based sources into a dashboard deliverable. *ISOdx*, the other finalist in this category, takes the concept of 'change management' to an all new level.

"With customer expectations and product complexity continuing to rise, embracing innovation is the only way companies can continue to deliver breakthrough customer success. We recognize these solution providers as delivering truly unique and differentiated offerings that embody the spirit of innovation in service and support technology," said Ragsdale.

Putting the "Excellence" in Service Excellence

Since 1989, SSPA's STAR Awards have recognized companies that have implemented and properly managed the most innovative and efficient processes for service and support delivery. Winning a Star Award is recognition from your peers that you are the best of the best – this is the most significant award that a support organization can win in the industry. The judging process is rigorous—applications are thoroughly analyzed and ranked on a scoring system by the SSPA Advisory Board that looks at customer satisfaction data, core metrics and the ability of the company to package all of this into a compelling and meaningful story.

Winners were honored on Tuesday October 2nd during a popular luncheon awards ceremony. I would also like to call out a special congratulations to Cisco Systems who was inducted into the SSPA Hall

of Fame. This special recognition is awarded to a select group of companies that have won five SSPA STAR Awards since the program's inception in 1989.

The 2007 SSPA STAR Awards for Service Excellence winners by category are:

Service Excellence in...

- Complex Application Support – **Tektronix**
- Consumer Support - **StoresOnline**
- Continual Improvement – **IBM System x, BladeCenter & Intellistation (xBCI) Client Support**
- Emerging Business Support – **Approva Corporation**
- Innovative Support – **Xerox Corporation**
- Integrated Services – **Xerox Corporation**
- Mission Critical Support, Software – **SAP AG**
- Mission Critical Support, Hardware – **Dell**
- Outstanding Improvement – **Symantec Corporation**
- Partner Management, Consumer – **Hewlett Packard**
- Partner Management, Enterprise – **Cisco Systems**

The Big Tent: Keynotes

The theme, “Enabling Breakthrough Customer Success”, proved extremely relevant to the nearly 500 conference attendees and pervasive throughout the sessions—from the pre-conference workshops and SSPA advisory board, to the keynotes and breakout sessions—the take-home message was clear: “the support industry is in the midst of significant, positive change”.

The vast majority of conference attendees had the title of “Director or above” and comprised members of the largest global technology companies, diversified small- and medium-sized businesses, noted industry consultants and support technology vendors—all of whom share in the mission to advance the support industry and develop effective ways to make technology customers more successful.

On Monday, I opened the conference with my “State of the Industry” keynote and turned things over to IBM’s Paul Loftus, GM of Maintenance and Technical Support Services. Paul talked about the 4 areas where imagination, innovation and investment are required: client self-service, collaboration, globalization, and virtual worlds. “Virtual worlds” seemed to catch folks by surprise, and even more-so when Paul gave a demonstration of the virtual world IBM is developing to support hardware and software with an increasingly popular application called Second Life. This was one of the most unique keynotes I have ever attended. SSPA’s John Ragsdale continued the keynote sessions by announcing SSPA Research programs for next year, including the construction of an RFP library for key technology areas, and closed by announcing the

2007 SSPA Fall Recognized Innovators.

Keynote attendees later Monday and Tuesday gained new insights from a truly innovative and diverse line-up of speakers and panelists who offered thought-provoking perspectives on communities, viral communications, globalization, business model transformation and other customer success factors. Andrew Lippman, Founding Associate Director, MIT Media Lab, hosted the STAR Awards luncheon and focused on innovation. If you ever have the opportunity to meet him or see him speak—don't pass it up. Andrew is an innovation machine and his presentation was riveting. Also popular with attendees were keynotes James Glueck, VP of Technical Services and Customer Advocacy with Cisco; Nortel CMO Lauren Flaherty; and Bob Brauer, CEO, President & Co-Founder of Strikelron.

The Sessions: Breakouts

In a recent SSPA survey, conference attendees indicated that breakout sessions are where they find much of the value of attending SSPA events, and over 90% said they would recommend SSPA conferences to a colleague based on the high quality of the breakout sessions alone. Based on my own experience, I couldn't agree more.

Although I'm sure I missed some great sessions because I simply couldn't attend all of the breakouts offered in 6 tracks, of those I did attend, I had some favorites.

I took special interest in the following breakouts sessions listed by track: (*SSPA Members can find all of the [conference presentations](#) from Services Leadership 2007 on our website*).

- **Strategy Creation**
Delivering a Superior Ownership Experience With Value-Added Support
Anthony Cavotta, Oracle Corporation
- **Delivery Optimization**
Special Account Services: One Size Does Not Fit All
Dan Walkowski, Xerox Corporation
- **Organizational Alignment**
Transforming the Customer Interaction Experience
Ravi Ravishankar, Cisco Systems
- **Aligning Support and Product Development**
The Product Quality Index: Bridging the Gap with Product Teams
Brad Smith, InQuira & James Pendergast, Openwave
- **Globalization and Emerging Markets**
Optimizing Globally Outsourced Support Operations
M.M. "Sath" Sathyanarayan, Global Development Consulting
- **Innovative Support Technology**
Successful Support Communities Start Right Here
Joe Cothrel, Lithium Technologies & Tarik Mahmoud, Linksys

In terms of popularity with attendees, let's do the numbers—some sessions were standing room only. Here are the 5 sessions with the biggest crowds:

- *Online Support Knowledge Readiness at First Product Ship*
Arnfinn Austefjord, Sun Microsystems, Inc.
- *Adopting a Support-Oriented Strategy*
Jan Mellman, Motorola
- *Case Study: Measuring Self-Service and Support Capacity with the Avaya Diagnostic Model and Service Resolution*
Andrew Cohen, KNOVA; Karen A. Cerroni, Avaya; Brian Hayward, Avaya
- *Better Support Through Better Knowledge Transfer*
Bob Tatemichi, Kaidara; Daryl Bruxvoort, Pearson Assessments
- *The Cisco Customer Intelligence Platform: Taking the First Steps Toward Services-Led Product Development*
Ray Cutler, Cisco Systems, Inc.

Community

The SSPA was proud for the opportunity to convene in New Orleans—to both experience a legendary city and contribute to its recovery. The city was welcoming, the venue extremely accessible, the weather was great (for those of us who got outside) and the people were wonderful. In short, the Big Easy is back, and in many ways, better than ever.

What shouldn't be ignored though is the juxtaposition of the legendary jazz, unique neighborhoods, generous people and regional cuisine with the basic needs of people living there who are still struggling today—2 years after Hurricane Katrina.

The SSPA was honored to join the legions of companies bringing conferences to New Orleans so we could play our part in helping the economy—and literal infrastructure—of this great city. Immediately following the conference, a team of nearly 40 individuals comprised of SSPA members and staff spent a day in community service working with Habitat for Humanity on their project to build new housing in the Ninth Ward area of downtown New Orleans, one of the areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina. I'd like to give a personal thanks to all who joined us that day, and to SSPA's Trisha Bright for making it happen.

Coming Soon

To close, I'd like to give a sincere thanks to all of the conference attendees, speakers, partners SSPA staffers, volunteers, hotel staff and everyone else who made this such a successful event.

If you're an SSPA member, you can access all of the conference presentations [here](#). Also, we have 2 important events coming up that I'd like to fill you in on:

- *Technology Services Europe 2008: Taking place April, 2008 in Paris, France*

This is a one-of-a-kind event featuring the combined networks and power of co-locating the content and people from 3 industry associations: SSPA | TPSA | AFSMI. More information coming soon.

- *SSPA Best Practices 2008: Taking place May, 2008 in Santa Clara, CA*

This is the preeminent SSPA event to develop, optimize and share industry best practices with the broadest and deepest range of technology services managers. Call for speakers will be announced in the next couple of weeks and this promises to be the biggest event we've ever convened.

"This year's SSPA Services Leadership conference was an outstanding event. The keynote and breakout sessions focused on the strategic aspects of moving our services businesses forward and provided new perspectives for leaders on how to address the challenges we're all facing. As a support executive, I found this to be an invaluable experience," said Julie Hogan, Region Vice President, Xerox Services.

About Stephen Smith.....

Steve Smith has championed innovation and change throughout an impressive 17-year career spanning several industries. Most recently, Smith is credited for leading IBM's On Demand Business Transformation strategy globally for 30,000+ Business Consulting Services employees. During his time at IBM, Smith also developed and launched their Component Business Model offering to global customers, and led services strategy for IBM's Business Performance Transformation Services—IBM's strategic initiative to move into high-value, high-growth areas.

Previously, Smith gained accolades for leading the successful operational transformation for the customer care operations of one of the largest telecommunications providers in North America. In addition, Smith had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership not only in diverse industries and billion-dollar corporations, but in small and medium-sized companies as well. Smith helped build one of the largest independent Lotus Notes consulting and software businesses which was later sold to Ernst & Young, and continuing along the entrepreneurial track, Smith co-founded and acted as the COO of Encadia, which was sold to Mainspring, and later, to IBM.

Smith holds the position of SSPA's Executive Director to further develop SSPA's unique vision for the future of support, and build the vital resources and networks that will help members transform the support industry.

Smith, a Wharton MBA, lives in Westlake Village, Ca with his wife and 2

children.



Comments? Suggestions? We would like to hear from you. Please email the editor at sspanews@thesspa.com.

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