

OACCAC Increases Collaboration and Productivity with Streamlined

Overview

Country: Canada

Industry: Healthcare

Customer Profile

OACCAC is a member services organization that serves to advance excellence in community healthcare on behalf of CCACs and the clients they serve.

Business Situation

OACCAC needed an efficient way to improve mobile staff collaboration with a more efficient way to streamline its various voice mail, wireless, email and messaging capabilities.

Solution

OACCAC enlisted the help of Microsoft Certified Partner, MTS Allstream, who aided them in implementing the Office Communications Server 2007 within the organization.

Benefits

- Improved Service Provision
- Enhanced Collaboration
- Better Staff Productivity
- Reduced Costs with Improved ROI

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Ken Sutcliffe, Director of IT Services, OACCAC

The Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC) is a member services organization that serves the needs of 14 Community Care Access Centres (CCAC) across Ontario. Responsible for providing 8,000 users in 250 offices with IT and networking services, the organization wanted to improve mobile staff collaboration and find a more efficient way to streamline voicemail, wireless and email messaging capabilities and incorporate VoIP features into their communications system. With technical assistance from Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner MTS Allstream, OACCAC upgraded to a new unified communication solution based on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 and Exchange Server 2007 with Unified Messaging. The new system extends the organization's communication capabilities, which enables staff to more consistently deliver quality customer service.

Situation

The Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC) is a member services organization designed to advance excellence in community healthcare on behalf of Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and the clients they serve. CCACs are local organizations established by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that provide access to government-funded home and community services, as well as long-term care homes, to clients throughout the province. There are 14 CCAC main offices in different jurisdictions throughout Ontario, and a total of 250 secondary offices that serve as local points of contact.

Along with physicians, hospital teams and other health care providers, CCAC case managers and care coordinators work to ensure clients are able to live independently at home with the support of health care professionals, and help them apply for admission to a long-term care home. Additionally, CCACs offer programs for those with specialized or acute health care issues, for example brain injuries, or children with specialized health needs.

Case managers and care coordinators pride themselves in their quality client assessments. They regularly travel around Ontario to visit clients and their families at home and in hospitals, as well as doctors and other health care agencies. With staff frequently on the road, and with the CCAC office locations spread out across the province, staff frequently drive long hours in order to meet with clients or attend training sessions and meetings. This posed challenges, as case managers had no easy way to access their email or voicemail while they traveled, which meant they often missed important communications. The OACCAC wanted to find a way to better connect the staff of the member organizations with each other and with the information they need.

In addition, in 2006 the CCACs underwent major restructuring that realigned their office boundaries, as mandated by the provincial government. While this realignment helped improve access to healthcare, it also created a challenge for the CCACs and their employees in terms of productivity and collaboration, as the new boundary issues further added to their travel times.

“If you think of the geography, especially in Northern Ontario where a remote office can be two to four hours away from a central office, you can easily see why we needed a way for our people to work more effectively while travelling,” says Dean Gillan, Technical Architect, OACCAC.

Solution

To help identify a solution that would meet all its communications needs for collaboration and VoIP and to minimize the need for training, the OACCAC turned to MTS Allstream for a more seamless solution. As a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner, MTS Allstream recommended the OACCAC upgrade to a more advanced unified communications solution based on Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007, Office Communicator 2007 and Exchange Unified Messaging, allowing the organization to build on its Microsoft Exchange 2007 and 2007 Office system infrastructure.

With the framework for a telephony solution already in place, implementing Office Communications Server and Unified Messaging would allow OACCAC to tap into advanced instant messaging and Presence features, conferencing capabilities and VoIP features.

“One of the most important features OACCAC was looking for was ease of integration,” explains Evan Zaleschuk, Director of Collaboration Technology, MTS Allstream.

“They wanted a solution that was relatively easy to deploy, provided an intuitive user interface that workers were already familiar with, and works with their existing environment in a way that would not be obtrusive. They didn’t want to complicate their desktop environment and add more applications, so using a Microsoft platform complemented their IT structure well.”

“We knew a software-based model of unified communications would help us streamline communications – bringing together email, instant messaging, phone and conferencing, making it more intuitive for staff,” says Ken Sutcliffe, Director of IT Services, OACCAC. “In addition, because Office Communications Server 2007 and Office Communicator 2007 work with the applications and infrastructure we know and use today, we didn’t have to invest in training for our staff or for CCACs, or have to rip and replace hardware.”

The plan for OCS rollout was to commence with the technical teams of the OACCAC and CCACs, then subsequently moving it out to all staff at the CCACs.

Benefits

Since implementing Unified Messaging, Office Communications Server 2007 and Office Communicator 2007, OACCAC has not only improved connectivity between the Association and CCAC offices across the province and increased staff productivity, but also reduced travel costs and realized improved ROI.

“We are thrilled with the new unified communications tools,” says Sutcliffe. “The Presence feature really helps save time and our staff can reach people and access voicemails without having to pick up the phone.”

Improved Quality of Service

As they continue with the implementation of OCS 2007, IT staff now have an innovative technology that assists them in practicing more efficient and effective service provision to those people who provide client care. Recent studies show that a quarter of all information workers spend more than 30 minutes a week unsuccessfully reaching people via telephone. The near seamless integration of Office Communications Server with Microsoft Active Directory® service distribution lists for Group instant messaging and Presence allows IT staff to view the status of their colleagues before contacting them by instant messenger, email or phone. This enables technical account managers and the network administrators to connect faster and more efficiently, and helps them respond quickly to staffs technical issues – something that is especially important for organizations that are so widely regionally distributed.

Taking advantage of new conferencing capabilities, including multiparty audio conferencing using voice over IP, web and video conferencing, and VoIP features for PC to PC calling and click-to-call within Microsoft Office applications, allows users to make and receive phone calls using a PC. Working in conjunction with Exchange Server 2007, Office Communications Server 2007 instantly adjusts a contact’s status based on their calendars. This allows people to quickly determine the availability of their contacts, helping OACCAC and CCAC staff save time to ensure that case managers have access to the information they require to provide clients the care they need.

“Staff members are extremely impressed by Presence feature in Office Communications Server 2007. They really see it as an effective application that has created an immediate reliance on the information it provides,” says Sutcliffe. “With it, I know who is in the office

and who is not. It's a great tool that's easy to use."

Enhanced Collaboration

Previously, to facilitate communication between the OACCAC and member organizations, staff traveled to meet in-person with colleagues throughout the province. While face to face meetings continue to be important, features in OCS 2007 enable executives to meet in-person less frequently as they are able to take advantage of virtual meetings. As a result, travel time has been reduced.

To further assist teams in collaboration, the OACCAC has implemented video-conferencing technology, Microsoft RoundTable in their boardroom. RoundTable is an advanced conference phone with a built-in 360° camera that follows flow of conversation at a conference, and can be connected to a standard PC to offer synchronized voice and video conferencing. RoundTable works by creating a panoramic video of the images of those participating in the conference. In addition, it tracks the flow of the conversation, so the image and voice of the person speaking are spotlighted.

By utilizing such Roundtable features, the employees located at two or more offices throughout Ontario converge for training or meetings and are able to integrate virtual presentations, shared whiteboards and files into their audio/video conferences and training. This cuts tremendous travel time as well as costs, leading to increased productivity and a greater focus on health care and customer service. In addition, if a staff member misses a conference call, the sessions can be recorded and viewed later.

"We recently held a full RoundTable meeting using Live Meeting 2007 and in the past, if people were unable to attend or had to attend remotely, we would've told them about

the meeting and given them a copy of the PowerPoint," said Sutcliffe. "But now you can log into the meeting offsite using a webcam and experience the meeting, seeing full interaction, body language and posture of people, which has received very positive feedback."

Better Staff Productivity

With an upgraded communications solution, workers who were often out of touch or hampered by distance barriers are now easily connected to the OACCAC IT department. This constant access to emails and voicemails anytime, anywhere has helped to boost productivity between the CCACs and the OACCAC.

As a result of the realignment of the CCACs across the province, the tool has been invaluable in application to work through some communication issues.

"Because the OACCAC has had a pivotal role in assisting CCACs in the alignment of their IT systems with during their significant recent reorganization, those using the tool find it helps them to collaborate as they merge into one new organization," says Gillan.

"Transitioning to the system was simple, and it has been easy for them to adopt with little training prior to deployment, which has ultimately given them more time to work with their counter parts in CCACs and with other staff who can be located throughout the province."

With Office Communications Server 2007, the desk phone capability goes everywhere a worker goes, so they can make and receive VoIP calls, join video and web conferences, and IM or email from anywhere they can access an Internet connection. The voice software ensures that customers attain high voice quality regardless of the connection they are using,

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For more information about Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres (OACCAC) products and services, call (416) 750-1720 or visit the Web site at: www.ccac-ont.ca

"I think the Voice component is one of the big benefits," says Gillan. "Now, if we get an email from a user, we view the Presence information of the senders and those copied on the email, making it easy to turn that email into a voice call with just a couple of clicks. It definitely eases those different modes of communication."

Reduced Costs and Improved ROI

Office Communications Server 2007 is a software-based solution that integrates seamlessly with existing Microsoft software. This helped the OCCAC reduce the risk of additional upgrade costs. As well, features like Presence contribute to faster, easier and more efficient connectivity. Users also waste less time trying to get a hold of contacts, and become easily reachable while traveling – a key benefit for OCCAC and CCAC staff.

"From a business perspective, the benefits of implementing OCS 2007 have been enormous," says Gillan. "We're seeing a huge return in investment if you consider the time our workers save. Several meetings that took place over the past few weeks utilized this technology and saved the organization the costs of flying staff to meetings around the province."

As Office Communications Server 2007 is deployed throughout the remainder of the 14 CCACs and offices, the OACCAC in association with the CCACs will continue to find even more collaboration opportunities and benefits leading to even greater ROI.

Microsoft Office System

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