



Overview

Country or Region: Australia

Industry: Education

Customer Profile

Leading Australian educational institution Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has approximately 40,000 students and 3,500 staff across nine faculties and four campuses in Brisbane.

Business Situation

The university wanted an integrated collaborative environment so staff, researchers and students could communicate. However, its technology infrastructure could not handle this level of functionality.

Solution

The university conducted a pilot project of 120 user mailboxes on Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 to evaluate its capabilities as a communication platform and ease of integration with legacy systems.

Benefits

- Potential savings of more than A\$340,000.
- Advanced collaboration capabilities.
- Better data security.
- Improved compliance.
- Server consolidation.

Queensland University of Technology to Save A\$340,000 with Unified Communications

“Senior managers around the organization are becoming aware of how even small amounts of time saved can translate into real dollars.”

Graham Keys, Director of Infrastructure Services, Faculty of Information Technology, Queensland University of Technology

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) provides industry-leading education to approximately 40,000 students at four campuses across Brisbane. The organization employs approximately 3,500 staff in nine faculties and five divisions. Wanting to utilize technology to improve collaboration and communication between staff, students and the outside world, the university realized its existing messaging systems were not up to the task. Having selected Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 as the basis for a new unified communications system, the university decided to participate in the rapid deployment program for Microsoft Exchange Server 2007. A study by independent third-party analyst BearingPoint found the university could save more than A\$340,000 each year by migrating its messaging infrastructure to the new platform. It could also expect to gain considerable benefits such as greatly improved collaboration, security, compliance and records management and more efficient use of technology.

“Unifying all these communication systems will allow staff to work more efficiently in an integrated team environment and help us deliver information to the right people as quickly as possible.”

Graham Keys, Director of Infrastructure Services, Faculty of Information Technology, Queensland University of Technology

Situation

The success of any university hinges on its ability to efficiently create, gather and disseminate information in a way that leads to and takes advantage of new ways of thinking and doing things. As education vies with tourism as Australia’s second-most valuable export, the ability to foster strong collaboration between researchers, staff and students and distribute information around the world becomes a key selling point for the country’s educational institutions.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) provides industry-leading education to approximately 40,000 students at four campuses across Brisbane. It employs approximately 3,500 staff. The university aims to add to its academic strengths by developing strong ties with business, government and the general community. It also aims to be a leading user of information technology in its teaching, research, business support functions and infrastructure.

“We recognize that close-knit communities are the breeding ground for innovation, so we want to provide an information technology environment that encourages strong collaboration,” says Graham Keys, Director of Infrastructure Services at the Queensland University of Technology’s Faculty of Information Technology.

“Since early 2005, we have been developing an integrated collaborative environment that would allow people to communicate across distances, particularly around research and in the teaching arena where more students are looking to do their studies remotely or electronically.”

However, the university’s technology infrastructure was not up to providing this advanced level of functionality. It had an email system, a standalone calendar

application, a fax system and a PBX that handled phones and voicemail.

“Our strategic direction has been to choose best-of-breed systems, but we bought discrete applications for particular needs and often had to get them to talk to one another and our back office infrastructure to provide a total solution,” says Keys. “The results could be a bit piecemeal.”

For example, staff email was handled by a mail appliance and accessed using a separate client application.

“This caused significant issues because, under this system, people’s email was stored on their PC hard drives or local file servers,” says Keys. “We couldn’t back up or archive email without undue effort by local IT support staff.

“If a notebook got lost, confidential information could fall into the wrong hands. If a hard drive crashed and hadn’t been backed up, users could lose all their old email messages.

“Many students use instant messaging every day but staff don’t have the option of using it to communicate with them or each other. We also have videoconferencing systems, but you have to sit in a dedicated room to use them.”

In addition, the separate email and calendar systems meant staff spend considerable time switching between applications and copying information from one to the other.

“What we really wanted was a single environment that provided all those features and allowed people to connect with each other using a variety of information sharing tools,” says Keys.

The university commissioned technology analyst firm, Gartner, to put together a

blueprint for a technology overhaul that would help it create an integrated collaborative environment and provide timely services to its internal clients. One of Gartner's key recommendations was to implement a unified communications environment that brought multiple forms of communication – including email, phone, voicemail, fax and instant messaging – into a centralized delivery system and a single interface for end users.

"Gartner told us it would be difficult with the technology we already had and our most suitable choices were either Microsoft Exchange Server or IBM Lotus Domino," says Keys. "We were using Microsoft products heavily already in the university at the desktop level and had made the decision to move to the Microsoft Office Outlook® email client. We didn't have any IBM Lotus software, so a Microsoft solution was the obvious choice."

Solution

Queensland University of Technology had already started a limited trial of Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 with 900 user mailboxes in the Faculty of Information Technology. However, with the launch of the next version nearing, in mid-2006 Microsoft invited the university to participate in the rapid deployment program for Microsoft Exchange Server 2007.

"It's sensible to be cautious about implementing brand-new software, but we saw Microsoft's rapid deployment program as a way of mitigating the risks of using a first-release application," says Keys. "It also didn't make sense to do a full implementation of Exchange Server 2003 when the next version was coming out so soon."

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 offers robust, interoperable, server-based unified

communications tools that integrate with desktop and mobile clients to give information workers access to voice, fax, and email data from wherever they are and allows people to use the telephone to manage their email, calendar, and personal contacts. It also provides more options for the improved utilization of mobile devices.

The university started a pilot project to implement Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 on 120 user mailboxes out of the 900 already on Exchange Server 2003. Some users also trialed Microsoft Office Outlook 2007, while the remainder stayed with Microsoft Office Outlook 2003. In particular, the university wanted to evaluate the product's email functionality and the integration with voice over IP phones, fax and instant messaging. It also wanted to see how Exchange Server 2007 would interoperate with its existing back office systems.

For the pilot project, a Microsoft Services Consultant worked onsite at the university for one-and-a-half weeks to install Exchange Server 2007 and train the technical support staff on installing and maintaining the application.

Queensland University of Technology has since gone to the market for a vendor that will help it deploy Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 towards the end of 2006. The university hopes to migrate all staff mailboxes to the new unified communications platform by the end of February 2007.

Benefits

As part of the pilot project, Microsoft engaged independent technology analyst, BearingPoint, to evaluate the benefits Queensland University of Technology might achieve from a full deployment of Microsoft Exchange Server 2007.

BearingPoint found the university could achieve considerable financial, strategic and operational benefits from migrating to the unified communications platform.

Saving More than A\$340,000 per Year

According to BearingPoint, moving to Exchange Server 2007 would eliminate several productivity bottlenecks for staff.

With separate login IDs for network, email and calendar, the time staff spent entering usernames and passwords added up quickly. Because Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 provides email and calendar functionality and is integrated with Microsoft Active Directory®, staff would only need to log into their PCs once a day. BearingPoint calculated that if it took each staff member 20 seconds each day to log into the email system and another 20 seconds to log into the calendar, removing this requirement for 3,491 staff would save 9,500 hours or A\$330,000 each year.

With 1,200 staff using hand-held PCs based on Microsoft Windows Mobile™, the university could achieve additional cost savings from the integrated Microsoft ActiveSync® functionality in Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 by simplifying the process of installing synchronization software, synchronizing users' hand-held PCs with their calendar and contacts and changing hand-held PC passwords. BearingPoint found this would save an additional A\$6,200 each year.

An integrated email and calendar system could also eliminate the need to copy meeting data manually from email messages to the calendar. BearingPoint found that the cumulative saving added up to 200 hours or A\$7,200 annually.

“Because our calendaring system is almost impossible to integrate with Exchange Server or the Office Outlook client, we had to keep using it for the time being,” says Keys.

“However, once we do a full rollout of Exchange Server 2007, we can move everyone over to using their Exchange Server calendars.”

These time savings, although seemingly minor individually, added up to a potential cost reduction of more than A\$340,000 each year.

“To be honest, \$340,000 is probably a low figure because we were very conservative with our estimates,” says Keys. “We only looked at these three areas and didn’t even try to quantify the strategic value of moving to a unified communications platform.

“The BearingPoint analysis was a good exercise to go through. We distributed the results internally and they received a lot of interest. Senior managers around the organization are becoming aware of how even small amounts of time saved can translate into real dollars.”

Integrated Collaboration and Communication

Moving email from local machines to a central server will have one immediate benefit: users will be able to access their email, calendars, contacts and other messaging functionality from home or while traveling using the Office Outlook Web Access features built into Microsoft Exchange Server 2007.

BearingPoint also identified a series of longer term benefits that Queensland University of Technology could achieve once it integrated Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 with existing services such as IP telephony, instant messaging and document management. Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 could serve as the focal point for the university’s vision of an integrated collaborative environment.

Rather than using the university's stand-alone videoconferencing systems, staff could initiate video calls from their desktops using tools such as Microsoft Groove and Microsoft Communicator. These tools would be integrated into the university's directory systems, making it quick and easy to locate and connect to colleagues.

Using Microsoft Communicator and Microsoft Live Communications Server, both of which integrate seamlessly with Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 and the Microsoft Office Outlook client, the university could provide instant messaging that is secure, centrally controlled and easy to archive centrally. The presence-awareness capabilities of this software would make it easier for staff to contact each other in the quickest and most appropriate way.

Once the university's existing PBX telephone system reaches the end of its expected life, it will likely be replaced with an IP telephony system. This will reduce the infrastructure support costs of maintaining separate phone and data networks. IP telephony can be integrated with Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, allowing users to access voicemail messages from their inboxes and perform basic calendar, contacts and email functions over the phone.

"Unifying all these communication systems will allow staff to work more efficiently in an integrated team environment and help us deliver information to the right people as quickly as possible," says Keys.

More Efficient Use of Technology

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 is a native 64-bit application, which allows it to operate with larger database and mailbox sizes than previous versions. The 64-bit architecture will allow the university to get more out of each server, which will lead to long-term savings in datacenter space and infrastructure costs.

"We're moving a number of systems in the university to a 64-bit platform, so this will help us consolidate our infrastructure and use a smaller number of servers," says Keys.

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 is designed to perform a number of roles within the communication infrastructure, which will allow the university to further consolidate the number of servers it needs to maintain, especially as the messaging system is integrated with infrastructure such as IP telephony.

"When we deploy Exchange Server 2007 to all our users, we'll be able to replace the separate diary application they have been using, which is quite a large potential saving," says Keys. "The staff who have been trialing Exchange Server 2007 in the pilot project told me they can't wait to switch over to the Exchange Server calendaring system."

Data Security and Integrity

Queensland University of Technology's most valuable asset is the intellectual property its staff and students generate on a daily basis. Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 provided an opportunity to regain control over the security and integrity of this information.

"With email stored on people's PCs, we ran the risk of losing valuable intellectual property because of a lost or stolen notebook or a hard drive failure," says Keys. "The pilot project showed us how we could reduce this risk by moving all email data to a centrally managed server."

The centralized server model would allow the university to implement consistent and appropriate business continuity and disaster recovery measures to protect its data, something that wasn't possible when email was stored on local PCs and file servers.

“With email stored securely and managed in a recoverable fashion, there’s a much lower risk sensitive information will leak out of the organization and people don’t need to worry about backing up their own email,” says Keys.

Improved Compliance and Records Management

Centralized storage of email messages will also address a variety of compliance issues for Queensland University of Technology. In particular, it may be extremely valuable to have an audit trail of email, voice and fax communications.

“Centralized message storage will give us a single, authoritative source for document discovery,” says Keys. “If we had an intellectual property dispute, it could be vital that we be able to prove who said what and when.”

Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 will also integrate with the university’s Tower Software TRIM document and records management system and products such as Symantec Enterprise Vault, allowing it to set retention and archiving policies in line with regulatory requirements.

“We have very good records management processes for paper but until now we haven’t been as good with email,” says Keys.

“Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 will integrate with third-party products and allow us to treat email with the same rigor as paper.”

For More Information

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- Products
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2007
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

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