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Where Your Email Belongs



Telecommunication Firm Retires On-Premise Lotus Notes
in Favor of Ceryx's Hosted Exchange Platform

TBayTel becomes a customer and a white-label reseller of Ceryx's Hosted Exchange and Collaboration solutions

BACKGROUND

As the largest independent Telecommunications company in Canada, TBayTel takes its internal messaging system and processes very seriously. With 450 employees servicing an area over 300,000 square kilometers in Northern Ontario, email communications and collaboration tools have become critical for providing support and overall communications in such a broad geography.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Country: Canada

Industry: Telecommunications

Customer Profile: TBayTel is the largest, independent telecommunications company in Canada, providing data, voice and wireless services to the region of Northern Ontario. With more than 450 employees, the company has been in business for over 100 years and has the largest cellular network in the region.

Background: TBayTel has been running Lotus Notes as their messaging infrastructure for years. As the system became slow and outdated, and as it became more difficult to find qualified full-time personnel to manage the system, the company looked to find an alternative solution that could reduce their costs.

Solution: To address technical issues as well as staffing challenges, TBayTel made the decision to migrate from their on-premise Lotus Notes system onto Ceryx's Hosted Exchange environment.

Benefits:

- Lower Costs of Ownership
- Free up IT Staff for other more critical projects
- Increased Availability and Performance
- Greater Efficiency through delegated administration of automated tasks

For almost 10 years the company had been running an IBM Lotus Notes infrastructure on-premise to power their messaging infrastructure, but slow performance, challenges finding qualified staff to manage the system and the desire to reduce costs forced them to rethink their strategy. To further complicate matters, TBayTel had developed a number of internal applications for Lotus Notes, including an emergency communications service to enable the 130 employees with BlackBerry devices to use PIN communication in the event of a power outage.

Since 2007 TBayTel has been a white-label reseller of Ceryx's Hosted Exchange and Collaboration Solutions, through a division of the company that sells managed IT services, DirectIT. By virtue of this relationship the company had first-hand knowledge of the Ceryx Hosted Exchange and Messaging platform and the strong value proposition to support outsourcing messaging. The decision was made to practice what they preach and work with a trusted partner like Ceryx to transition their messaging infrastructure to Ceryx's Hosted Exchange and Collaboration platform.

"Reselling the Ceryx Hosted Exchange and Collaboration solution made us recognize and believe in the strategic value of outsourcing," says Angela Domansky Desserre, Vice President, DirectIT-Managed IT Services. "I was able to confidently make the case that outsourcing messaging, even for a mid-sized company like TBayTel, was not only more cost effective but would also deliver a higher level of service."

TBayTel believed strongly enough in the Ceryx solution and value proposition to not only sell it, but to use it themselves and move one of their most sacred corporate assets - their messaging data - off premise and onto a Hosted solution.

SOLUTION

TBayTel discovered that their internal situation and needs weren't that different than many of their DirectIT division customers. With a large mobile staff, they needed an email and messaging platform that would allow the company to layer on applications that added real value to the desktop as well as for mobile devices. Services like Microsoft Hosted Exchange and Windows SharePoint Services were a natural choice.

"One of the challenges that will always exist with any email system is managing data storage and mailbox sizes," says Desserre. "As messaging and the size of file attachments increase every year, you need to have strict policies and processes in place to keep data at a manageable level. We now use SharePoint to securely store large files and encourage users to send links rather than large attachments."

Data proliferation was evident during the preparation for the migration to Ceryx's Hosted Exchange platform, as the company exported 80 GB of existing data from their Lotus Notes system. The data was put on a hard drive and shipped to Ceryx, where project managers on staff, with extensive experience with IBM Lotus Notes and Microsoft Exchange, began planning the migration process with the IT staff at TBayTel.

The data was loaded onto specialized migration servers, developed by Ceryx and used to facilitate the migration. Special migration tools were used to synchronize data captured during the one-time copy and any new data generated since that time, and then convert the data from Lotus Notes format to Microsoft Exchange format. The goal being to have a 'live' and exact mirror copy of all data, for each user being migrated.

A decision was made that anyone with over 250MB of data would only have the last 90 days of data imported into Microsoft Exchange 2007. The remaining data would be archived and made available to the users through local file servers.

Once the migration servers were prepared, a 'rolling' migration was planned and executed. Different than a 'knife's edge' migration, which can be quite disruptive as all users are cut over to the new system at once, the 'rolling migration' allows both systems to peacefully co-exist while individual users or small groups are migrated in succession.

"Where do you want your highly skilled employees focused?" asks Desserre. "I don't think it supports our corporate growth objectives to have staff focusing on Anti-Virus or SPAM. We want to hire DBAs, Network Security Administrators and Application Developers and not focus our energies on maintenance."

This gradual approach helps avoid a concentrated spike in end-user issues as they adapt to the new system as well as help identify any potential issues early on before they impact the larger group.

To accomplish this Ceryx follows a well-planned process that uses aliases and email forwarding rules to ensure there are no delivery issues, regardless of whether a user finds themselves on the old or new system.

For each account all email, calendar and other PIM data was successfully imported into the Ceryx Hosted Exchange platform.

The entire migration took about 2 weeks, after which the MX records were changed and pointed to the Ceryx Hosted Exchange system. The old Lotus Notes environment was kept running for about a week before being decommissioned, to ensure no email was lost due to issues around the global propagation of MX records where changed and pointed to the Ceryx Hosted Exchange system.

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Any applications previously written for Lotus notes are now being converted to the Microsoft .NET platform and Ceryx worked closely with TBayTel to integrate their WIC Server (Wallace Wireless™), which provides emergency communication service to employees with BlackBerry devices and allows them to use PIN communication in the event of a power outage.

TBayTel continues to manage the WIC Server on-premise but the tight integration with Ceryx's Hosted Exchange platform means that as users are created in Exchange they are simultaneously added to the WIC Server.

“With the Ceryx Hosted Exchange solution I don't need that person in house,” says Brooke Dacre, Network Manager, TBayTel. “The Ceryx control panel makes it easy. You don't have to be an expert like you do with Lotus Notes.”

Ceryx provided training to TBayTel Employees but with their experience selling the solution and general exposure to Microsoft Outlook, they didn't require a great deal of training. “We install Microsoft Outlook on people's desktop and they are able to function right away. In the past, new employees would get 2 hours training on Lotus Notes and even after 10 years, it remained one of the top internal help-desk inquiries,” says Desserre.

All TBayTel employees are now fully operational on the Ceryx Hosted Exchange platform and use the Ceryx Control Panel to customize their SPAM settings.

BENEFITS

- **Lower Cost of Ownership:**

“I carefully analyzed the Total Cost of Ownership of running Lotus Notes on-premise vs. going with the Ceryx Hosted solution and there is no doubt - it is more cost effective for us to outsource, says Desserre. “But that doesn't even factor in all the other costs associated with running email on-premise.”

Often less tangible costs are not factored into a TCO calculation, such as the HR resources required to recruit good Notes Administrators. This is a position TBayTel has found more and more difficult to fill as many skilled IT employees are now focusing on the Microsoft platform and developing applications in .NET.

“With the Ceryx Hosted Exchange solution I don't need to fill that administrator position anymore,” says Brooke Dacre, Network Manager, TBayTel. “The Ceryx control panel makes it easy. You don't have to be an expert like you do with Lotus Notes.”

- **Free up IT Staff:**

For TBayTel, freeing up IT staff to focus on other more critical projects and directives was almost more important than the direct financial benefits of outsourcing.

“Where do you want your highly skilled employees focused?” asks Desserre. “I don’t think it supports our corporate growth objectives to have staff focusing on Anti-Virus or SPAM. We want to hire DBAs, Network Security Administrators and Application Developers and not focus our energies on maintenance.”

- **Increased Availability and Performance:**

Popular wisdom suggests that moving from an on-premise solution to a hosted solution might result in degradation of service, but not with the Ceryx Hosted Exchange solution. “Everyone loves it -it is so much faster. The response time is much better,” says Dacre. “In retrospect, clearly bandwidth was not the bottleneck but rather the old infrastructure was causing the performance problems. The scale of the Ceryx infrastructure is something we could never match and honestly wouldn’t want to. That’s not the business we’re in.”

- **Greater Efficiency Through the Delegated Administration of Tasks:**

The Ceryx control panel provides advanced delegation of administrative duties making it easy to distribute common tasks such as resetting password, increasing mailbox sizes and even more complex tasks like managing BES (BlackBerry Enterprise Server) accounts.

“I can assign common tasks to anyone. The same person who gets the support ticket can now deal with it directly rather than having to forward the request to the Lotus Notes administrator,” says Dacre. “That means better and faster support for our customers and increased efficiency for our company.”

CONCLUSION

“We made the decision to go with Ceryx because it met all our messaging and collaboration needs and in many cases exceeded them, says Desserre. “ But to existing and prospective clients it’s a powerful statement about value, performance and security that we use and trust the same solution that we sell.”



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