

case study



Eurodata helps Frontier Economics to unify their communications

Overview

Collaborative working to suit the needs of a highly important, remote workforce was the key driver behind Frontier Economics' decision to task leading systems integrator Eurodata Systems with an important three-stage Unified Communications project.

Based in London and with offices around the world, Frontier has developed a reputation as a leading economic consultancy, operating across a diverse range of industries from energy and finance to healthcare, media and retail.

The company has long championed the use of technology as a productivity enhancer, and to that end, a decision was taken to implement a series of Microsoft-based Unified Communications (UC) and collaboration technologies that could deliver on the objective of providing users with a real boost to their productivity, to improve efficiency and provide the business with a competitive edge enabled by their UC strategy.

Background

Frontier's globally dispersed workforce comprising of 80 consultants are highly mobile and often travelling between offices and client meetings. They looked to Eurodata who proposed to implement a solution which would deliver a communications and collaboration experience as effective

and efficient in a remote location such as an airport departure lounge, as if they were in their own office.

Enhanced collaboration would provide consultants with a working platform allowing ideas and documents to be easily shared securely in real time. Underpinning this, Frontier wanted to ensure a high level of business continuity between their two key European locations – London and Cologne.

The Solution

The solution has been designed to meet the precise needs of a geographically spread, mobile workforce which requires enhanced and very powerful communication and collaboration services. It is based around the adoption of Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 on Windows Server 2008 with Unified Messaging and Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007. It delivers a range of powerful Unified Communications features to the company's distributed user base in order to greatly enhance and facilitate options for collaboration across their virtual teams – regardless of geographical location.

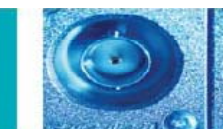
Unified Communications (UC) functionality includes call answering and voice mail recording, with voice messages and missed call notifications delivered to the user's email inbox and made available via handheld device, desktop or laptop computer. Interactive

Voice Recognition (IVR) enables inbox and calendar access over the telephone. The solution also supports 12 languages and roaming users.

Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 gives Frontier a secure and robust corporate real time Presence and Instant Message capability across the organisation. It provides enhanced presence capabilities, meaning users can see if someone is busy, available, away from the office before contacting them. It enables audio/visual conferencing and integrates enterprise Voice over IP capability with the existing PBX. Each element of the service is delivered securely to internal and external users.

Another key feature is the ability to hold live meetings over the web. Frontier has a high-level teleconference system across the entire organisation. Live meetings can be arranged quickly, and escalated on demand from an exchange of instant messages to a voice call to a high quality video conference, regardless of the user's location, and at the click of a button.

The inter-site business continuity has been configured between London and Cologne offices using Standby Continuous Replication (SCR). Rich anti-virus, application and network security is provided via Microsoft Forefront technology.



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Implementation

Eurodata engaged in a series of detailed business and technical planning workshops to ensure effective implementation. This allowed Eurodata to gain a thorough understanding of requirements to develop a design in conjunction with the client's technical staff. Eurodata believes close working relationships are essential to the delivery of high quality solutions that fully meet customer expectations while leveraging the client's tacit knowledge of their business culture and of their existing infrastructure.

Frontier's principal technical challenges included integrating the client's existing PBX with the Unified Messaging server, overcoming compatibility issues with third party product support on Windows Server 2008, and understanding required changes outside of the Microsoft environment, e.g. PBX licensing implications.

In each case, solutions were arrived at through close working relationships with Eurodata's partner organisations, primarily Microsoft and Mitel. Success required a detailed understanding of telephony and Microsoft infrastructure components that extended beyond Exchange and OCS 2007, namely Active Directory, DNS, firewall and proxy servers and proprietary PBX knowledge.

Results

The overall solution has exceeded Frontier's expectations. The Unified Messaging and Outlook Voice Access has brought considerable benefits, allowing consultants to manage their diaries via voice control, which is ideal for when they are travelling and receiving voicemails. Previously these messages would have been held on their desk phone awaiting their return to the office.

"For the first time we have a corporate Instant Messaging and live presence solution, which has been welcomed by the entire user base. It has enhanced team working, significantly improved collaboration and helped to accelerate key business processes."

Andrew Soper, Frontier Economics

The ability to view colleague availability has proved very useful for those consultants who have busy diaries. It means they can make informed decisions on when to contact each other, saving considerable amounts of time.

The enterprise voice aspects have proved invaluable for their mobile and field workers, giving them the same level of communication that they would have as if they were in the office.

"Overall the solution has been a catalyst to improved communication, collaboration and team working, and strongly supports Frontier's cultural values – benefits which we have been able to pass on to their clients."

Andrew Soper, Frontier Economics

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