

Oil Company Streamlines Messaging, Boots Efficiencies with Unified Communications

Engen

industry:

Manufacturing - Oil and gas

country:

South Africa

business challenge:

Large mobile workforce needs ability to communicate from anywhere at any time which the existing multi environment messaging platform did not allow

solution:

A unified communications solution consolidates three separate communication systems into one integrated messaging platform, accessible locally and remotely

services:

- Planning, deployment and integration services for Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 with Unified Messaging
- Planning services for Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005 Enterprise Edition

results:

- Improved collaboration
- Streamlined manageability
- Optimised performance
- Tightened security
- Enhanced productivity

Executive Summary

Engen Petroleum (Engen) headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa, is a subsidiary of Malaysia-based Petroleum Nasional Berhad (Petronas). **Engen boasts 27 percent of the South African petroleum market** and has interests in more than 20 African countries.

With a large mobile workforce servicing regional and international sites, its existing multi environment messaging platform did not adequately support the messaging demands of the organization. Therefore, in April 2007 Engen collaborated with Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data to upgrade from Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 to Microsoft Exchange Server 2007. With the introduction of Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging, employees now have universal access to e-mail, voice mail, and faxes no matter where they are. The upgrade has also resulted in gains in collaboration, manageability, performance, security, and employee productivity

Business Challenge

Engen Petroleum (Engen) is a leading African oil company headquartered in Cape Town, South Africa. The company employs approximately 4,800 people in 12 production sites and 100 depots throughout Africa. A subsidiary of Petronas of Malaysia, the company has the largest market share (27 percent) of the South African petroleum industry and operates 1,258 service stations. The company generates annual revenues in excess of U.S.\$2.9 billion and has a net asset value of U.S.\$700 million. It owns and operates its own refinery that produces more than 130,000 barrels of oil per day.

Due to its large number of offices and the high mobility of its workforce across the continent, messaging is a critical function for the company. Engen previously used multiple messaging platforms that included four different systems and four different sets of tools to access them. The company used Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 for e-mail, RightFax for sending and receiving faxes, IronMail for spam and antivirus mail filtering, and CallXpress for voice messaging. This combination proved unwieldy and complex to administer, so the company decided to consolidate its communication infrastructure for voice mail, e-mail, and fax.

“Engen had to license multiple servers to run the applications and had multiple maintenance contracts with the vendors. There were also integration problems between the systems - for example, when the company upgraded its voice-mail desktop messaging application, the e-mail messaging system blocked voice-mail messages from being delivered to the desktop,”

explains **Christoph Hollander, Microsoft Consultant, Dimension Data.**

Multiple systems also required administration by IT staff specialized in each application.

During deployment or as part of the normal refresh cycle of the company, technical staff needed to install each application onto individual desktops, which was a large drain of time and resources. Furthermore, ensuring migration of the applications from one computer to another without losing data proved difficult.

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Another drawback of this multiple-platform system was that mobile employees had limited access to messages and communication. For example, when employees were working remotely, they could not access voice mail, view calendar information, or make use of telephone directory services – thus hindering their productivity. In addition, faxes could be viewed only when employees had access to a fax machine.

Because of the financial transactions between Engen and its vendors and dealers, security was important. The company also needed a robust, safe messaging solution with built-in antivirus and anti-spam programs to protect its users, its system, and its intellectual property.

“We wanted a secure, single point of contact that would enable our employees to click on one application for all their messaging requirements,”

says **Trudy Kumalo, Team Lead, Microsoft Competency Centre, Engen Petroleum.**

“Our key requirement for upgrading to a new messaging platform was its ability to provide a safe collaborative environment, with integration between the different messaging tools. We also wanted to make sure employees could find out exactly where the person was whom they were trying to contact and whether that person was available or not.”

Solution Delivered

To meet its collaborative messaging needs, Engen chose to work with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data. Ultimately, Engen decided to migrate from Microsoft

Exchange Server 2003 to Exchange Server 2007. “Our company has consistently used Microsoft products for many years and we’ve been very happy with them,” says Kumalo. “It was a logical move.”

The initial phase, begun in April 2007 and completed within the month, included 102 employees using Exchange Server 2007, with 54 employees enabled for unified messaging.

With Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging, users can receive e-mail messages, voice mail, and faxes in their inbox, which they access using the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2007 messaging and collaboration client. Plans are in place to increase these numbers after October 2007 to 1,800 e-mail-messaging users and 100 unified-messaging users, respectively. Dimension Data was responsible for supplying technical skills to upgrade to the new messaging technology, ensuring system integration, and training IT staff to administer and maintain the platform.

The Exchange Server Unified Messaging solution allows employees to listen to, forward, and reply to e-mail messages, and to make, update, or respond to meeting requests over the telephone. Users can also flag messages for follow-up, skip to the next unread message, hide or delete conversations, and even find messages from particular users. All these functions use either voice navigation or a standard touchtone keypad (DTMF). “In addition, employees no longer have to be at their desks to access the telephone directory, e-mail messages, or their calendar,” says Kumalo.

Previous communication systems at Engen delivered messages into several different types of storage systems, including voice-mail systems, e-mail message servers, and standalone fax machines. Now, with Exchange Server Unified Messaging, all types of messages are stored in one highly accessible system. Even voice-mail messages are delivered directly into the user’s inbox, offering powerful new ways to collaborate more effectively. The solution also enables mobile employees to

access their messages through Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access using a Web browser, and Office Outlook 2003 or 2007, outside the firewall. Users have flexible access through a variety of mobile devices, including the option to use a standard phone line using Microsoft Office Outlook Voice Access with speech recognition.

“Now with integration between the communications client and the Private Automated Branch Exchange (PABX), employees know who is calling them, and any missed calls go straight into their Outlook inbox,” says Kumalo.

Previously, IT staff had to be trained on different voice, fax, and e-mail messaging systems. They had to monitor and troubleshoot in multiple places, provision accounts for each employee in multiple directory infrastructures, and manage the security and maintenance of all of these essential systems on an ongoing basis. With Exchange Server Unified Messaging, the IT department has significantly fewer demands – for both installation and maintenance. In addition, the Exchange Server 2007 environment includes built-in antivirus and anti-spam protection.

Engen is also piloting unified messaging with 100 users running Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005 Enterprise Edition. Live Communications Server will deliver both instant messaging (IM) and user presence features as part of a total, scalable solution, giving the company enhanced security, integration with other Microsoft products, and an extensible development platform for all 4,800 employees.

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Value Delivered

Using Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging, Engen employees can be productive from almost anywhere at any time, using a broad range of devices – including a simple telephone. Unified messaging has simplified and streamlined communications for the company and greatly reduced the complexity of managing its messaging needs.

Improved Collaboration

With the introduction of unified messaging, Engen employees can access messages and calendar data, respond to meeting requests, flag messages, and respond to requests – no matter where they are or what device they are using. Engen has realized significant performance improvements, increased security, and improved employee productivity.

The solution has also resulted in improved collaboration and integration that supports the needs of mobile employees.

“By using the flexible access that unified messaging allows, our employees can now connect with each other from any location at any time. On the road they can use their mobile phones, and in the office it’s even easier to get hold of someone using presence information,” says Kumalo.

Streamlined Manageability

Unified messaging has reduced the time that IT staff needs to perform administrative tasks, and improved the efficiency of the IT administrators. “The ease of use of the administrator interface is especially helpful to us. We now have one system instead of three to administer,” says Kumalo. Instead of administering three disparate and totally isolated systems, IT staff can manage all messaging requirements through a single, easy-to-use, and consistent interface. “This means our administrators can consult and see everything that they need to from a single screen,” explains Kumalo. “The amount of training required is also less than with three separate systems, and our backups and any forthcoming upgrades will be much easier to manage too.”

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Dylan Owen, Microsoft Systems Engineer, Engen Petroleum

Optimized Performance

“The company has witnessed a significant performance improvement. Access to e-mail from Outlook is faster, with a better response time from the server,” says Dylan Owen, Microsoft Systems Engineer at Engen.

Engen no longer requires performance-sapping Virtual Private Network (VPN) access into the company network for employees who need access from remote locations. All employees can now use Office Outlook Web Access to view and work on files located on internal servers with a corresponding increase in speed and convenience. Additionally, the option to use faster 64-bit hardware means more-effective use of capacity than with the original systems. “There can be more users per individual server without affecting performance now,” adds Owen

Moreover, the upgrade to Exchange Server 2007 was seamless; employees were not subject to any change or disruption, and could continue using the familiar Microsoft interface and menu structures - a significant improvement over the previous setup.

Tightened Security

“We are definitely more confident of our communications security,” says Kumalo. “Exchange Server uses encryption technology to help keep messages confidential inside the organization and over the Internet, and actively protects our users.” The Exchange Server environment also offers integral protection for the company’s valuable intellectual and financial property, with built in security technologies, including antivirus and anti-spam software and services for email and instant messaging, to protect against the latest security threats.

This is vital for Engen, as security is a major consideration in the highly competitive energy industry. The frequent and automatic updates to junk e-mail filters and antivirus signatures ensure up-to-date protection for all Engen employees, no matter what their location or hardware platform.

Enhanced Productivity

The company’s mobile employees can now stay connected through quick access to all of their communications – including voice mail, e-mail, and faxes – from Outlook 2007, Outlook Web Access, and mobile devices. “Our employees don’t have to be at their desks to get integrated access to all their various communication tools,” comments Kumalo. This means that no matter where employees are – on a rig, at the refinery, at their desk – the work of keeping the gas running can go on without the need to run for a phone, computer, or fax machine when they need to access a particular type of message.

“Now our employees can be productive even when they are on the road. They can access everything they need without waiting. The introduction of unified messaging is making a big difference to the way we work,” adds Kumalo.