

WHITE PAPER



There's more to communication than e-mail:

Unified communication and collaboration, information sharing and team productivity services

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Microsoft[®]
Communication Services



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Executive Summary

For most organisations, e-mail is a critical application. But as internet technologies have developed, new collaboration and communication tools are now available from within the same Microsoft Outlook interface that most business e-mail users are familiar with.

These new services – available on a hosted basis as Microsoft Communication Services from Azurance – include shared document workspaces, and instant messaging, applications which are rapidly gaining adoption in business due to their ease of use and the productivity gains they offer through enhanced teamwork and collaboration.

Microsoft Communication Services can lead to significant cost savings throughout an organisation, with the potential to reduce travel and training costs, real estate costs, telephony costs, IT infrastructure costs and more.

In addition, IT managers benefit from a reduced administrative burden and the peace of mind that comes with the knowledge that services are reliable, secure, resilient to threats, compliant and based on the latest technology from Microsoft.

Many businesses already take advantage of hosted e-mail services. As these e-mail services are extended to become a suite of communication tools this will create greater flexibility and control of the business communication and collaboration environment while increasing cost savings, efficiency and reliability already enjoyed.

Introduction

As any organisation knows, e-mail has become a business-critical application. But Web technologies have rapidly evolved, enabling a growing spectrum of capabilities offered by communication and collaboration tools. While e-mail remains crucial to many organisations, it is now part of a much broader set of equally business-critical tools.

Successful businesses are built on good communication – and companies are now able to reach out to colleagues, customers and partners in more ways than ever before. With a broader set of communication tools, people can share documents and collaborate on projects from locations around the world; they can share schedule information with colleagues to make sure everyone makes the best use of their time; they can even hold real-time meetings with people anywhere in the world while sitting at their desk, using only a PC and Internet connection. Most importantly, businesses can be present to their customers when it counts, wherever they are.

Clearly, tomorrow's successful businesses will be built on more than just e-mail. The technologies that enable this level of connectivity are available to every business, and those that don't embrace them may find it difficult to compete. But IT implementations, like any business decision, need to be justified in terms of ever-tightening budgets.

There is a way to access all of these communications capabilities that is not just cost-effective in terms of IT spend – it can also save money by reducing the amount of time and money spent on travel. A growing number of companies are discovering the benefits of a comprehensive suite of unified communications tools, based on industry-leading Microsoft technologies and delivered over the Internet with no need for upfront investment.

Enterprise-level communications solutions

Businesses of all sizes recognise the importance of unified communication tools, but many have hesitated to embrace them for fear of increasing complexity, cost and the burden on IT resources. What do you do if, for example, instead of growing your business, you find yourself spending unprofitable hours on routine IT management?

The good news is, whatever a company's budget, there is a way to avoid this possibility. Many businesses are already aware of the value of hosted e-mail services – from ease of deployment to simplified, centralised management and security, and reduced costs. It makes sense to extend that efficiency and convenience to other services – and in today's connected world, this can be easily achieved.

Implementing a set of information sharing and team working applications is only half the story, though. People work best with technologies they know, and if they constantly need to switch between applications, they won't use them to best effect, and the potential gains in productivity won't be fully realised. Using a single, familiar application interface with the ability to access all services makes a lot of sense and helps increase adoption of new technologies and reduces training requirements.

Microsoft Communication Services – a full suite of unified communication, information sharing and collaboration tools including Microsoft SharePoint, and Office Communication Server – is available through the familiar Microsoft Outlook interface, which has become central to most people's working environment. Users can send e-mails, access shared documents, schedule appointments, hold real-time online meetings and instantly connect with colleagues through instant messaging (IM) and PC-to-PC calls, all fully integrated within Outlook.



These are the business-critical solutions and capabilities that Microsoft Communication Services provides:

Workload 1: Messaging and Collaboration

Microsoft Office Outlook®

- Manage your e-mail, calendar, tasks, and business contacts from one place
- Help protect yourself from junk e-mail and malicious software
- Share your calendar with people within or outside of your organisation

Microsoft Exchange

- Professional e-mail, calendar and contacts you can access from virtually anywhere, at any time and on any device
- Additional online tools for e-mail management, spam protection, encryption and emergency access
- Interoperation with other communication services as Microsoft SharePoint, and Office Communications Server

Microsoft SharePoint®

- Share documents, team calendars, contacts and manage workflow through a single, Internet-based location
- Rich team collaboration and improved productivity
- Seamless interoperation with Outlook for calendars, contacts and tasks

Workload 2: Real-Time Communication and Online Conferencing

Office Communications Server and Office Communicator

- See colleagues' availability status and presence
- Instantly connect with colleagues
- Auditable internal company instant messaging with enhanced security

Workload 3: Advanced Unified Communications

Office Communications Server and Office Communicator

- Manage voice mail, e-mail, and faxes from one Inbox
- Combined e-mail, instant messaging (IM), and VoIP capabilities

Why outsource your services?

There are many reasons why outsourcing communication and collaboration services is a good idea. In particular, it cuts the capital expenditure associated with buying hardware and software, as well as the operational costs and resources needed to manage the solution.

The software-plus-services model of IT solution delivery enables IT decision makers to choose which services they have in-house, and which ones are delivered online. You can even choose a hybrid solution, which combines hosted services with capabilities that can only be achieved with software running in a corporate data centre or locally on a powerful device. The wide range of options available gives businesses of all sizes the opportunity to optimise productivity using enterprise-level applications.

There are four main benefits of Microsoft Communication Services:

Increased Productivity

Reducing complexity for both IT and end-users always has a positive impact on productivity – IT workers can devote their attention to projects that add value to the business, and end users can access the services they need quickly and easily.

Taking a suite of unified communication services from Azurance can unlock these productivity gains. With Microsoft Communication Services, users access all their communication and collaboration applications through Outlook, helping them to get more done without adding extra complexity.

Support Mobility

The productivity gains that can be made by enabling mobile workers are immense – they can communicate with colleagues, manage their schedules and make informed decisions whether at work, home, a customer's premises or travelling between locations.

Hosted Exchange enables secure access to e-mail, calendar and contacts from virtually anywhere, at any time on a variety of different devices, through Outlook Web Access and via a mobile phone. Calendars and contacts can also be shared with colleagues to enable easy scheduling for meetings. Microsoft SharePoint provides access via any web browser to the key documents and information. Microsoft Office Communicator opens a wide range of communication options to users, enabling them to communicate easily with others in different locations or time zones using a range of communications options, all via a consistent and simple user experience.

Enhance Teamwork

Sharing information is vital to efficient teamwork and decision-making. Microsoft SharePoint lets employees share documents, contacts, calendars and tasks through a single cloud-based location with rich team collaboration capabilities to help teams work more effectively whether they're in the same offices or at different locations.

Enable Collaboration

Meetings, training sessions and workshops are key to any business, but it can be difficult to get everybody together in the same place at the same time, and travelling to and from meetings and events can prove costly and time consuming.

Keep Informed

As well as working more efficiently together, employees and customers can access real-time or recorded training content when they need it, giving them the resources and support to help them work at their best.

Connect with Colleagues

Hosted Office Communications Server lets colleagues and team members see each other's presence status and instantly connect with each other through a secure and auditable internal company instant messaging system or through a PC-to-PC voice connection.

Reduced Costs

It is widely accepted that outsourcing services can significantly reduce the cost of IT. It is well known that hosted e-mail services can enable businesses to benefit from a secure, reliable e-mail system without having to invest time and capital on hardware, implementation and system management. Extending the hosted environment to other communication and collaboration applications can help to ensure both further cost reductions and greater predictability.

Travel and Telecoms

A key area of business expenditure that should not be ignored is travel – in an increasingly global business environment, many organisations have employees, customers and partners spread across multiple geographies and locations. It is crucial to such businesses that their people are able to communicate and collaborate with each other, wherever they are. But

attending multiple meetings can be costly and time-consuming, not to mention its impact on the environment.

The following savings are based upon Forrester Research, *2007 Total Economic Impact of Unified Communications*:

- Reduce real estate and facility costs (30-40 percent): Reduce office space per employee and improve space utilisation with tele and remote working
- Reduce telephony and audio-conferencing charges (10-40 percent): Replace long distance and audio conferencing call charges with PC-to-PC VoIP
- Reduce the cost of voicemail (20-60 percent): Replace and consolidate disparate voicemail and fax systems with unified messaging.
- Reduce IT infrastructure and administration cost (up to 50 percent): Extend existing investment while optimising IT infrastructure by consolidating servers and multiple vendor solutions.

No Upfront Expenditure

Now, more than ever, the upfront capital costs of in-house IT solutions can stand in the way of implementing the solutions you want to help your business. Budgets are tightening, and hardware costs are perceived by many to be an unwarranted expense. However, a 'make-do-and-mend' attitude to IT can also be costly, with staff lacking the support they need to deliver the best levels of service. By outsourcing your full suite of integrated communication and collaboration services, you can reduce these obstacles by removing the need for upfront capital expenditure.

Predictable Ongoing Costs

As well as removing upfront expenditure, a hosted model offers predictable ongoing costs because the entire suite of integrated services is delivered on a per-user, per month subscription basis. Hosted services enable servers, infrastructure and software to be updated by the service provider – a cost-effective way for businesses to ensure that their communication and collaboration technology is always up-to-date.

Protect Existing Investments

Existing investments are also protected through a new licensing model from Microsoft, which is available through a range of hosting providers. This enables businesses to use existing Microsoft licenses covered under Software Assurance with their hoster of choice.

Microsoft Communication Services is both an economical and easy to scale with business growth, as well as ensuring that there will be no unexpected bills for fixing broken hardware or systems. In addition, special bundled service pricing makes the full suite of Microsoft services economical as well as making communication and collaboration more efficient and productive.

Reduced Complexity

Any unified communication and collaboration system is going to involve a certain amount of complexity – and with that comes cost. Aside from the initial investment in hardware and software, resources are needed to configure, integrate and deploy the solutions, across the organisation. Even for a relatively simple system, this can involve considerable complexity, and it doesn't end there.

Following the implementation, the IT infrastructure will need ongoing management, and user identities may need to be managed for each application. Regulatory compliance is a growing concern across many industries, so information must be auditable as well as secure. In addition, end users may need training for different applications, and as newer versions are released, repeat training and refreshes might also be needed.

This complexity can be dramatically reduced by taking an integrated suite of services from one supplier. The services can be quickly deployed, and it is easy to manage and upgrade from one or more services to the full suite. In addition, a complete unified communication and collaboration suite removes the need for multiple user identities. Each user has a single



identity, with only one password to remember, and users can be added and removed with ease. Training needs are also minimised because users can access the services through software and interfaces they are already familiar with.

With hosted services, the infrastructure and software is owned and licensed by the supplier. This means that all the services are controlled via a single, Web-based control panel that enables organisations to easily manage all their services from one location. For example, new users can be easily added with a few clicks rather than undergoing a cumbersome installation process. In addition, services will be supported by the hosting provider on a 24x7 basis, drastically reducing the maintenance resource burden on your company.

Hosted services can also offer an easy way to take care of regulatory compliance. Azurance offers archiving solutions without the need for expensive internal solutions and infrastructure. Because the services are hosted elsewhere and offered on a subscription pricing model, they will not become obsolete, but will evolve with the changing regulatory and legislative requirements in your market.

Peace of Mind

A major threat facing many businesses with in-house IT systems is the prospect of downtime and, in the event of a system failure, data loss. Businesses are increasingly vulnerable to the risks of viruses, spam, phishing attacks, system crashes and security breaches. In addition to ensuring that services are consistently available to those who need them and that business-critical data is kept safe, businesses also need to make sure their business records are compliant with a growing number of regulations. This can cause a major headache for in-house IT teams, as well as impacting the business in terms of both costs and resources.

By bringing together your communication and collaboration channels into a suite of integrated services delivered online, businesses can minimise these risks while retaining control of their services.

Guaranteed Reliability

Because Microsoft Communication Services are delivered online, customers benefit from our service level agreement (SLA), which guarantees high levels of uptime so that services are consistently available to all who need them.

Security

Our hosted communication and collaboration services include multi-layered network protection, anti-spam and antivirus defences to minimise threats to the services, while users can access messages and shared documents over the internet using an encrypted connection, wherever they are.

In addition, all the data is stored centrally in secure, state-of-the-art, geo-redundant data centres with professional security solutions. Data backup service is also available from an offsite location for business continuity, allowing your data to be recovered anytime.

Compliance

Compliance with industry and governmental regulations and the integrity of data are increasingly important in today's business environment. It is crucial to know not only that data is secure, but also that it can be found when needed, and that its context and integrity are beyond question. This is difficult for businesses to achieve in-house – internal auditing and archiving solutions and infrastructure can be expensive, and as the regulatory environment changes, they may need regular upgrades or replacement.

Azurance delivers auditing and archiving solutions to help ensure that businesses meet their compliance needs without added expense, and because the solution is delivered and updated online, it will evolve with the regulatory and legislative requirements of the market.

Conclusion

There can be no doubt that the outsourcing model of IT solution delivery has evolved significantly beyond e-mail applications. Now, Microsoft Communication Services, the full suite of enterprise level unified communication and collaboration tools provided by Azurance can enable businesses of any size to optimise their communication tools in a cost-effective, secure and compliant manner.

Combining information sharing and team working applications in a single, hosted package of services is clearly worthy of consideration. Many businesses already take advantage of hosted e-mail services, so extending these to include a suite of communication tools will enable greater employee productivity from the communication and collaboration environment, increasing the benefits of cost savings, efficiency and reliability already enjoyed. For those that have not yet stepped into the world of unified communications, Microsoft Communication Services can offer a simple and effective way to remove costs while enabling efficiency savings and growth.

In the light of the gains that can be made at all levels of the organisation, perhaps the question of why businesses should outsource their services can be answered with another question – with all the capabilities and cost savings on offer today, and easy upgrades as the technologies develop in the future, why not?

Next Steps

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