CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY / EDUCATION

Central University of Technology

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>
> Ernst du Plooy
> Manager: Network and IT Security
> Central University of Technology

Central University of Technology Increases Collaboration Amongst More Than 10,000 Students and 1,000 Staff

OVERVIEW

Central University of Technology (CUT) is located in Bloemfontein, the heartland of South Africa. CUT is dedicated to quality education and training in science, engineering and technology. Formerly known as the Technikon Free State, the university was established in 1981 with 285 students.

Almost a quarter of a century later, in 2004, the CUT IT Staff began to evaluate their current messaging solution. They were now supporting two campuses that had 1,000 staff members and more than 10,000 students. They were using a combination of Pegasus Mercury Mail, Microsoft Exchange, Novell GroupWise and Novell Netmail. Managing all of these disparate email systems was an administrative nightmare. As a primarily Linux based organization, they were not running Active Directory and the Novell messaging solution was not being embraced by their user base.

CHALLENGE

CUT was faced with a similar problem plaguing many organizations today – running in a mixed environment of open source, Linux and Windows. They needed a solution that could bridge the diverse user communities, that was independent of any specific directory technology.

Being a technical institution, CUT had already identified their requirements but they had not found a solution that met all their needs. That's when they contacted Conversant Systems (Pty) Ltd, a Scalix Value Added Reseller, to assist with an evaluation of Scalix against other competing solutions. Having a deep technical competency, CUT simply needed guidance initially which Conversant was able to provide via telephone which lead to a two-day onsite visit to implement an evaluation version of Scalix. Choosing an email system that required little to no additional training on behalf of end users or the IT staff was key; after thorough testing CUT quickly knew Scalix was the solution, as it best fit their comprehensive list of requirements. Shortly thereafter, CUT contacted Conversant to assist with the installation.

Based on training and support during the evaluation implementation, CUT was able to completely deploy Scalix on their own, with only phone support from Conversant. Using eShuttle, a third party migration application, CUT was able to seamlessly migrate from their legacy systems to Scalix with no end user disruption in just a weekend, including user passwords. When students and staff returned Monday they had no idea their messaging solution had been upgraded – until they logged in. They now had a solution that was much more robust with a user interface that was much more appealing and user friendly.

SCALIX

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Central University of Technology, Free State – South Africa
University in South Africa with focus on science, engineering and technology.

Industry
Education

Requirement
A secure, affordable, easy to mange and use Linux-based messaging system that provided a collaborative calendar, support for Outlook and feature rich web client.

Product Used
Scalix Enterprise Edition
Scalix Community Edition

ABOUT CONVERSANT

Conversant Systems (Pty) Ltd is a highly-focused software company dedicated to selling and supporting best-of-breed Linux-based office productivity applications in South Africa. Conversant was the first Scalix Reseller appointed in Africa and now has a user base of over 12,000 email users. Conversant staff has extensive Scalix and Linux Email experience. They have been involved in working with Linux-based Email since 2000. For more information, visit www.conversant.co.za.

ABOUT SCALIX

Scalix is the leading provider of enterprise email, calendaring and collaboration software based on Linux and open source. Scalix allows companies of all sizes to reduce the cost and complexity of their email environment with a richly-featured, reliable and scalable messaging solution that blends seamlessly with both open source and proprietary software, including Microsoft Outlook, Exchange and Active Directory. For more information, visit www. scalix.com.

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In sum, the goal was to find a Linux-based email system that could provide the richer functionalities including calendaring, be web-based, provide an easy interface with Outlook, provide cross-compatibility with Windows and Macintosh systems, ensure a secure environment, and all at an affordable price.

WHY SCALIX

CUT needed a single solution to fit the diverse needs of their end users and administrators. They were looking for a solution that offered flexibility and cross-platform interoperability.

From an administrative perspective, they were able to consolidate the number of servers required to support their organization from 5 to 3 and integrate their directory with Scalix to have a single point of administration. End users also benefited greatly. CUT was able to provide their staff with the Outlook support they desired without having to implement Active Directory or deal with the management of Exchange, and the students now had a web client, Scalix Web Access (SWA), with almost identical features and functionality as if using a desktop client. Because students had been resorting to hotmail, yahoo and other free messaging solutions, these low-function email clients had been using a significant amount of the university's network bandwidth.

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BOTTOM LINE

Scalix's robust email foundation, derived from Scalix's licensing of HP OpenMail from Hewlett Packard, helped make Scalix a messaging leader in terms of reliability and scalability, which greatly influenced CUT's decision to use Scalix. The migration from Exchange to Scalix was seamless -- even advanced Outlook users saw no disruption and continued to work as normal. Impressed by the support from both Conversant Systems and Scalix, du Plooy stated, "The support we received was by far the best we have experienced on any email system. Everything just worked."