



Paper Manufacturer Cuts Costs, Streamlines IT with Microsoft Collaboration Solution

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Pulp and paper manufacturing

Customer Profile

Headquartered in Albany, New York, Albany International supplies structured materials and related services to the worldwide pulp and paper industry. It had 2005 revenues of U.S.\$1.02 billion.

Business Situation

In late 2005, the enterprise-messaging solution at Albany had become costly to maintain and difficult to manage, and it didn't support the company's IT strategy.

Solution

The company deployed a comprehensive Microsoft® collaboration solution, including Microsoft Exchange Server 2003, Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003, Live Meeting, and Live Communications Server 2005.

Benefits

- Supports a centralized, consolidated server architecture
- Lowers the total cost of ownership
- Promotes more effective employee collaboration
- Simplifies IT management
- Provides a foundation for future enhancements

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Barry Duncan, Director of IT and Development, Albany International

Albany International supplies the worldwide pulp and paper industry with technologically advanced structured materials and related services. In 2005, the company's messaging solution, based on IBM Lotus Domino Server and Lotus Notes, had grown to 62 server computers and had become difficult and costly to manage. Notes/Domino also didn't adequately support the centralized data center or broad collaboration strategy that Albany was planning to implement. In response, the company deployed a collaboration solution that includes Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003, Office Live Meeting, and Live Communications Server 2005, along with its existing deployment of Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003. As a result, Albany has consolidated 62 servers into just 7, and it has reduced costs and simplified IT management. Employees also collaborate more effectively, improving their productivity.

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Situation

Founded in 1895, Albany International is the world's largest producer of custom-designed paper machine materials and process belts that are essential to manufacturing paper and paperboard. These engineered consumable fabrics are used to produce all grades of paper from lightweight wrappings to heavyweight containerboard. Additionally, the Albany family of companies provides specialized materials and structures for a variety of other industries. These include high-performance industrial doors, composite structures for the aerospace industry, belting for corrugating and tannery applications, industrial filtration products, and specialty fabrics for nonwovens and building-products manufacturers. Albany also produces PrimaLoft®, a patented “synthetic down” insulation for the technical outerwear and home furnishings markets.

Headquartered in Albany, New York, the company maintains more than more than 30 facilities that are strategically located to serve its global customers. Albany employs approximately 6,150 people worldwide and had 2006 revenues of U.S.\$1.02 billion.

For the last several years, Albany has been working on projects to improve the efficiency of its IT systems and make them easier to manage. Starting in 2002, for example, the company moved from Novell NetWare to the Windows® 2000 Server operating system and from Novell eDirectory to the Active Directory® service. In 2004, the company standardized on the Windows Server® 2003 Enterprise Edition operating system. And in 2005, Albany replaced an open-source Web page framework and content management solution with functionality in Windows SharePoint® Services and Microsoft® Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003.

Throughout this period, Albany continued using IBM Lotus Domino Server and the Lotus

Notes client for enterprise messaging. In late 2005, however, the IT department began planning to move from a distributed IT architecture to a centralized data-center model. It also wanted the company's enterprise messaging system to more closely align with the new IT model and with an overall strategy of encouraging more employee collaboration. “The biggest issue we had with Notes was that we had to maintain so many Domino server computers—62 of them, located worldwide,” explains Barry Duncan, Director of IT and Development, Albany International. “These servers generated a lot of network traffic, created unnecessary data replication, and consumed a lot of resources.”

Duncan adds, “Also, IBM was planning to more closely integrate its Notes/Domino solution with its WebSphere technologies. However, we were increasingly relying on Microsoft SharePoint Products and Technologies, and the development groups within Albany International were increasingly creating applications using the Microsoft .NET Framework. This presented us with a challenge because we were heavily invested in Notes, but we wanted to continue moving toward what we knew was a good collaboration and development strategy in Microsoft .NET connection software.”

Solution

In November 2005, the Albany IT department examined the costs and benefits of migrating from Notes/Domino to a collaboration solution including Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 and the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003 messaging and collaboration client. “I looked at our Enterprise License Agreement and realized that we were on the right track in terms of cost,” says Duncan. “Although our primary motivation was not cost, it turned out that switching to Exchange Server 2003 would be less expensive than continuing to use Notes and renewing its license. The main

reasons we chose this solution were that Microsoft collaboration software components integrate easily with each other and with our operating environment, that it would require fewer servers, and that it would support our new data-center architecture while supporting our development strategy.”

In addition to Exchange Server and the company’s existing deployment of SharePoint Products and Technologies, the following components would contribute to a comprehensive collaboration solution:

- Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005 is a scalable, enterprise-grade instant messaging (IM) and integrated presence solution. Presence awareness is the ability to detect another user’s availability on one or more devices. Live Communications Server also supports peer-to-peer audio, video, application-sharing, and data collaboration.
- Microsoft Office Communicator 2005 is an integrated communications client that information workers can use to communicate in real time.
- Microsoft Office Live Meeting is a hosted Web conferencing service that provides real-time collaboration.
- Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2004 is an advanced stateful packet and application-layer inspection firewall and Web cache solution that helps improve network security and performance. ISA Server also supports the company’s implementations of Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access, Exchange Server ActiveSync® technology, and remote procedure call (RPC) over HTTP for remote access.

Additionally, Albany had previously deployed Microsoft Office Project Server 2003 to support enterprisewide project management, and the company used this software to help

manage the migration to the new collaboration solution.

Migrating Domino Servers and Notes Mailboxes

In December, the IT department presented the solution to upper management, and a month later Albany began seeking a partner to help with migrating Notes mailboxes to Exchange Server. Responding to a request from Albany, Microsoft provided a list of qualified partners, which Albany used as a starting point for soliciting project proposals.

In April 2006, Albany chose to work with Intrinsic Technologies. Founded in 1997 and headquartered in Lisle, Illinois, Intrinsic Technologies is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with competencies in Advanced Infrastructure Solutions and Security. This technology service provider and consulting firm focuses on Microsoft infrastructure solutions and helps customers improve performance by aligning their business processes and technology. In helping Albany, Intrinsic Technologies followed the Microsoft Solutions Framework, a fully integrated set of software development processes, principles, and proven practices for implementing high-quality solutions.

Over the next three months, the two companies planned the migration and created a deployment schedule, focusing especially on consolidating servers and moving them to a centralized data center. Albany also updated its corporate network to accommodate the new centralized model.

In August, Albany began a pilot project, first moving a small number of users to Exchange Server, then moving an entire office, followed by a full business unit, and finally deploying the solution enterprisewide. This phase took two months to complete and includes 4,000 Exchange Server users across 37 sites, all supported by five servers in a clustered

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configuration located in their Global Datacenter.

Also, in parallel with the Exchange Server migration, Albany selected Windows Mobile® powered smart phones as the company’s mobile device standard. The company believes that this solution is working well and is already adding value.

Migrating Notes Applications

Because Albany International maintained so many Notes applications—nearly 17,000 unique Lotus Notes databases—the company decided to migrate them in a separate project. It used the Microsoft Application Analyzer 2006 for Lotus Domino, along with similar tools from third-party vendors, to evaluate its Lotus Domino Application environment and to prepare for application coexistence and migration. First, the company analyzed the applications to identify which ones were the most critical and frequently used, and it migrated these right away. Older, unused applications were excluded from the migration plan entirely.

The company also used the Microsoft Application Transporter 2006 for Lotus Domino to migrate data from Notes applications to Windows SharePoint Services (WSS) lists. With this tool, Albany can select a group of Notes applications, map the Notes fields to corresponding WSS fields, and then copy the information to the WSS lists. “If a particular Notes application template is unmodified, then Microsoft tools make it very easy to migrate the application directly into SharePoint functionality,” says Duncan. For other Notes applications, Albany is using third-party migration tools.

The Notes application migration phase is still in progress and will continue for several months. The company currently has two SharePoint servers and will soon raise the

number to four to accommodate increasing corporate demand.

Upgrading to the Latest Microsoft Collaboration Software

In January 2007, having successfully completed the Exchange Server 2003 mailbox migration, Albany began upgrading to the following software and continued working with Intrinsic Technologies to deploy the Exchange Server component:

- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
- Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
- Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise x64 Edition
- Windows Server 2003 R2 Standard x64 Edition
- Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007
- Microsoft Office Communicator 2007
- Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2006

Albany completed the deployment of Microsoft Office Communications Server 2005 and Office Communicator 2005 in March and of SharePoint Server 2007 in May. The company will upgrade to Office Communications Server 2007 and Office Communicator 2007 later this year. Also in May, after completing a successful pilot project, Albany deployed enterprisewide Exchange Server 2007, the 64-bit edition of Windows Server 2003 (required for Exchange Server 2007), and ISA Server 2006.

Benefits

The new solution based on Microsoft collaboration software supports a centralized IT model that is less expensive and much easier to administer than the previous distributed architecture. Specifically, by replacing Notes/Domino with Exchange Server and SharePoint Products and Technologies, Albany has sharply decreased the number of servers that it must maintain,

lowering the solution's total cost of ownership. Additionally, the new solution promotes effective employee collaboration and simplifies overall IT management.

Supports a Centralized, Consolidated Server Architecture

The new Albany International IT architecture brings servers that were previously distributed around the world into one centralized data center. The Microsoft collaboration solution supports this architecture in part by using server hardware very efficiently and by seamlessly integrating with the Windows Server 2003 operating environment and its management tools.

"We went from 62 servers for Notes mailboxes and databases to 7 servers for comparable—and often superior—Microsoft functionality, and we maintain them in one place," says Duncan. "And by moving our intranet to SharePoint Products and Technologies and the .NET Framework, we'll be able to consolidate resources even further. From an administrative standpoint, that's a huge savings. The distributed architecture with so many servers was just hard to manage. We spent a lot of time chasing down Notes replication issues, for example. Now, we can refocus our resources on projects that bring strategic business value to Albany."

Tom Egan, Practice Manager for the Directory Services, Messaging, and Collaboration Group at Intrinsic Technologies, further emphasizes this point: "Albany needed about 12 IT administrators globally to manage the company's Notes/Domino systems. Now, with our managed service and the centralized environment, we're doing the equivalent work for Exchange Server with 2-3 people. This frees up the labor resources for other more important tasks."

Lowers the Total Cost of Ownership
Server consolidation, storage optimization, and fewer IT resources all translate directly into cost savings for Albany. Office Live Meeting is another solution component that directly saves costs. Specifically, through Live Meeting Web conferences, Albany reduces its expenses for travel, lodging, and incidentals that in-person meetings require. According to a Six Sigma quality study that Albany commissioned, the company expects significant annual savings in meeting-related expenses from this benefit alone. The service is also easy for employees to use. "Live Meeting works very well," says Duncan. "I don't recall that we've ever had problems with it. We use it very heavily and have come to rely on it."

Promotes More Effective Employee Collaboration

With the new solution in place, employees can communicate and collaborate with each other more effectively than before, even if they're in different offices, different business units, or different countries. Windows SharePoint Services and SharePoint Portal Server play an especially important role in supporting this collaboration. "SharePoint Products and Technologies provide a large part of our intranet functionality, companywide," says Duncan. "They're driving our calendaring, document management, and team sites. When people heard that Notes was going away, some were initially alarmed, not realizing that SharePoint functionality can easily fill the gap."

"Another key benefit to the Microsoft solution is integration," adds Duncan. "For example, our Active Directory is now available from both Outlook, our portal, and Windows Mobile powered smart phones, so people can find each other faster and get responses to questions faster. As another example, before, we were unable to search across several teams sites that were stored in separate

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Notes databases and on separate servers. Now, with SharePoint sites, we can easily do that, and this functionality will improve even more in Office SharePoint Server 2007."

"Also, we have links between Live Communications Server and Live Meeting," he continues. "And the integration between Live Communications Server, Exchange Server, and particularly Office SharePoint Server 2007 continues to grow by leaps and bounds. When we deploy the 2007 Microsoft Office release and Office Communicator 2007 later this year, that integration and flexibility in communication will reach a new level."

"Similarly, the integration between the Microsoft Office System and the core collaboration software is giving us huge gains—everyone being able to use the same document without storing multiple copies on file servers, to track the version history, and to make sure two people aren't working on the same document at the same time. While I don't have specific numbers, I know that better collaboration and communication are translating into an improvement in employee productivity—a big improvement."

Summarizing collaboration from the user's perspective, Duncan says, "We're getting a lot of good feedback from employees. I think people like the Microsoft collaboration solution not just because it makes them more productive but also because it makes them feel more connected to each other and more a part of the company."

Speeds Communication for Mobile Workers

With Exchange Server 2003, employees can access their data when they're on the road using their Windows Mobile powered devices, without Albany having to deploy a middleware solution. Direct support for Windows Mobile is further improved in Exchange Server 2007. "Our people can access the messages they

need, and we can access our people," adds Duncan. "Our smart phone strategy is proving to offer a big advantage for our mobile employees."

"Albany is a global company whose employees need to communicate effectively around the clock," adds Egan. "The new infrastructure based on Microsoft technologies is helping employees collaborate better across international boundaries and time zones. In particular, the Windows Mobile powered devices are helping the company's executives get critical information when they're out of the office and helping the sales force respond to customers faster."

Simplifies IT Management

The new collaboration solution contributes to an IT environment that's easier to manage by being highly reliable and scalable and by supporting the company's strict compliance policies. "From the standpoint of risk and complying with Sarbanes-Oxley, it's easier for us to support a centralized data center with reliable failover systems and running reliable software," says Duncan.

The new solution will also scale to handle the company's growth. "With only a few configuration changes, I think we could double the number of supported users and do it without increasing our hardware investment," Duncan adds.

Another aspect of the simplified IT management has been the ease of deploying the solution. "We finished the mailbox migration to Exchange Server 2003 in just two months," says Duncan. "A lot of people were concerned that this would be too fast. However, the longer we stay in a mixed environment, the longer we have to spend time resolving issues with people who continue using Notes, so the rapid transition worked better for both IT managers and employees."

Adds Scott Connolly, Senior IT Project Manager and Systems Architect, Albany International, "There is no acceptable level of error when dealing with employees' mailboxes. We were moving millions of mail messages; not only did it have to work, it had to be transparent. In a meeting with senior management at the end of that phase of the project, the executives said they assumed the migration was 'uneventful'—that is, it must have gone well because they had heard no complaints. That's exactly how we like IT projects to go: uneventfully."

Provides a Foundation for Future Enhancements

With the new solution in place, Albany has a solid foundation on which to build new enhancements. For example, later this year, the company will deploy Microsoft System Center Operations Manager 2007 to better manage the overall IT environment.

Albany will also deploy the latest version of Outlook Web Access using LinkAccess so that employees can connect to the company's SharePoint sites through the Internet without having to use a virtual private network (VPN) connection. (Employees already use Outlook Web Access to access their e-mail messages and calendars.) "For security reasons, it's not a good idea to give all remote employees a VPN connection because it opens up access to parts of the network that they don't necessarily need. VPN systems are also difficult to manage. We look forward to deploying LinkAccess, which will solve both of these problems." And soon, with Office SharePoint Server 2007, employees will be able to copy a portion of a SharePoint document library onto their portable computers for offline editing.

After completing a project to transition to a VoIP-based telephone system, Albany will implement Unified Messaging features in Exchange Server 2007 so that employees

can listen to voice mail within their Exchange Server inboxes. (Deployment of the component to read fax messages in inboxes is already under way.) Similarly, with Outlook Voice Access, employees will be able to access their Exchange Server mailboxes using a telephone; and through touch-tone or speech-enabled menus, they'll be able to hear and modify calendar appointments and listen to e-mail messages that are translated from text into speech.

Connolly concludes, "We have carefully chosen our technologies and software; the business integration benefits to be gained over the next five years will be astounding."

For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to: www.microsoft.com

For more information about Intrinsic Technologies products and services, call (630) 769-4111 or visit the Web site at: www.intrinsic.net

For more information about Albany International products and services, call (518) 445-2200 or visit the Web site at: www.albint.com

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Software and Services

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 - Microsoft Office Communicator 2007
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 - Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise Edition
 - Windows Server 2003 R2 Enterprise x64 Edition
 - Windows Server 2003 R2 Standard x64 Edition
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
- Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2004
- Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server 2006
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Hardware

- HP ProLiant DL585 series server computers
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Partners

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