



Food Service Company Boosts Daily Productivity with Communications Solution

Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom
Industry: Food—Wholesale and distribution

Customer Profile

Founded in 1989, JJ Food Service is a leading foodservice delivery and collection provider, supplying a full range of food stuffs across the United Kingdom. The company employs 700 people.

Business Situation

JJ Food Service wanted to provide capabilities such as presence, instant messaging, and desktop sharing to help make its employees more productive, so in 2008 it deployed Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2.

Solution

JJ Food Service upgraded to Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to take advantage of enhanced presence and ad hoc collaboration and online meeting features.

Benefits

- Improved daily productivity
- Removed barriers to communication
- Eased configuration and management

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Rif Kiamil, Chief Information Officer, JJ Food Services Limited

Founded in 1989, JJ Food Service is a leading independent food and catering equipment distributor in the United Kingdom, with revenue of more than £134 million (U.S.\$216 million) in 2009. With 700 employees working around the clock to ensure order and distribution systems function properly, communication and collaboration are critical to the company’s operations. Looking to add instant messaging, presence, and voice capabilities, it deployed Office Communications Server 2007 R2 in 2008. The solution integrated easily with its Microsoft messaging and business productivity solutions, and helped its employees be more productive at their jobs. In 2010, JJ decided to upgrade the solution with Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to provide ad hoc collaboration and online meeting capabilities and enhanced presence information that will further improve employee productivity.



Situation

Based in north London, with six locations in the United Kingdom, JJ Food Service Limited (JJ) was established in 1989 and now employs 700 people. The company distributes a range of ambient, chilled, frozen foods, as well as packaging and cleaning products. Winner of the Grocer Gold Award 2009 for Wholesaler of the Year, it delivers 500 tons of food and catering products per day to 20,000 business-to-business customers a month, with a fleet of 150 trucks from six distribution centers across England.

For JJ, profitability depends on highly efficient business processes—from taking customer orders accurately to delivering products on time with the correct billing information. JJ runs a 24-hour life cycle for order capture and delivery, so it cannot afford any lag. It depends on technology to help it manage everything from order processing and stock control to delivery routes and invoicing.

JJ relies on a number of Microsoft solutions to help it operate efficiently. For email, JJ has deployed Microsoft Exchange Server 2007. For business productivity, employees use Microsoft Office 2010 and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 to create, manage, and collaborate on documents internally. For enterprise resource planning, the company implemented Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009 to help with scheduling, order handling, and customer wait times.

JJ receives and handles more than half of its incoming orders over the phone. For voice, the company relies on a private-branch exchange (PBX) telephony solution from Cisco. It also deployed Cisco Call Manager to manage and route calls through its call centers. For audio conferencing, the company has relied on Cisco Unified MeetingPlace. It considered

deploying a solution from Cisco to provide instant messaging and presence as well, but ultimately decided against it. “We found that Cisco was not practical for instant messaging and presence. It was too much effort to deploy and maintain,” says Rif Kiamil, Chief Information Officer for JJ Food Services. “And it didn’t integrate well with the Microsoft solutions we already had in place.”

To provide more instant communication that it could integrate with its Microsoft solutions, the company worked with Microsoft Consulting Services to deploy Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 for 250 of its employees. Field sales staff and account representatives had access to presence, instant messaging (IM), and desktop sharing capabilities. The organization implemented federation with partners and consultants, so employees can see presence and calendar information for federated colleagues and easily connect with them through IM. JJ also deployed Exchange Unified Messaging to replace its Cisco voice mail solution. The unified messaging solution delivers voice mail to the Microsoft Outlook 2010 messaging and collaboration client. Because Office Communications Server is integrated with Microsoft Office 2010 and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010, employees can view presence and communicate with colleagues with one click through those applications.

Field sales representatives spend a lot of time traveling, so they use Microsoft Office Communicator Mobile 3.0 to stay connected. “A lot of our field sales people don’t use a computer,” says Kiamil. “With Office Communicator Mobile, they can see everyone’s presence and connect with people easily as long as they have a network connection.” Employees also use Microsoft Office Communicator Web

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Access to connect through a browser on any computer at any place—their homes, customer sites, or hotels—with a network connection.

JJ also used Office Communications Server application programming interfaces (APIs) to extend presence, instant messaging, and click-to-call capabilities into its Microsoft Dynamics AX system. Using the additional capabilities in Microsoft Dynamics AX, call center agents can more easily communicate with one another to coordinate scheduling or to find answers quickly when customers call requesting information about an order.

JJ Food Service deployed Office Communications Server in a standard pool at its data center. It used a direct SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) connection between Office Communications Server and its Cisco PBX to provide enterprise voice and click-to-communicate functionality. It also configured the voice system to ring all of an employee's phones—desk phone, mobile phone, and Office Communicator—for inbound calls.

The company believes that technology has been the driving force behind its success in recent years. Although it experienced greater efficiency with the solutions it had deployed, it constantly analyzes every aspect of its operations to see where it can improve employee productivity or business processes. The company believed it could find more ways to bring its solutions together and provide a better social-networking environment for employees that would remove barriers to communication. "The better our communication tools, the more productive our employees can be," says Kiamil.

Solution

JJ Food Service decided to upgrade its Microsoft communications solution by deploying Microsoft Lync Server 2010 to help employees improve the productivity gains they experienced with the current solution. Lync Server provides enhanced versions of the communications capabilities provided by Office Communications Server 2007 R2—presence, instant messaging, robust conferencing, and enterprise voice—as well as improvements in topology, deployment, and management tools. Again working with Microsoft Consulting Services, it will deploy the solution to 250 employees in November 2010.

JJ will take advantage of the more flexible architecture available with Lync Server deployments. It will keep the standard pool configuration it had implemented for Office Communications Server, but this time in a highly-available environment. Keeping the same physical servers, it will also virtualize server roles using Hyper-V virtualization technology, a feature of the Windows Server 2008 operating system.

For its employees, the company is currently evaluating voice hardware designed specifically for use with Lync Server, including the Plantronics Voyager PRO USB headset that employees can use to place and manage calls and conferences through the Lync 2010 client on the desktop.

To reduce its costs, JJ plans to phase out Cisco MeetingPlace in favor of the ad hoc collaboration and online meeting capabilities in Lync Server. To make communications widely available, it will integrate Lync Server 2010 with Exchange Server 2010, Microsoft Office 2010, and Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010. Employees will have the same user experience across all the products: they can view their colleagues' presence information,

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and with one click they can easily start a chat session or place a call.

Desktop sharing is popular with IT and all JJ employees. The IT team will continue to use desktop sharing to troubleshoot issues and to train people how to use new software. Employees have been using desktop sharing extensively to collaborate on projects. Now, in the Lync 2010 client, they can also use the whiteboarding feature for more interactive brainstorming sessions. Another Lync feature JJ plans to implement is Skill Search, which people can use to find subject matter experts in other departments or other regions more easily. They will also use the Activity Feed to update their status for coworkers, thereby enhancing the usual presence information that people can already see. JJ will also use the Location feature, so that people can see where their fellow sales representatives are working on a given day.

JJ will also use the application programming interfaces (APIs) in Lync Server to extend its capabilities in original ways. For instance, it will use APIs to have Microsoft Dynamics AX send an instant message to the responsible parties when stock levels are running low in the warehouses. JJ would also like to create a program to represent servers in its network as users in the Lync client. Each server would display presence information, where the indicators represent the server's health. If someone in IT saw that a server's indicator was yellow or red, he or she could instant message the server about its health to gather information on how to resolve the issue. JJ would also like to create a program using the Location and presence features to track its delivery trucks. That way the company could more easily know the whereabouts and availability of trucks in case it needed to change delivery routes.

The IT team plans to take advantage of built-in Lync Server capabilities as well. To help better route calls internally, the IT team will use the Response Group Service in Lync Server to create internal response groups for smaller teams. They can also use Windows PowerShell scripting to easily deploy and manage Lync Server, including how it interfaces with Cisco within the network, and with the web-based control panel, they can manage Lync Server from anywhere on the corporate network.

Although JJ has already implemented federation so employees can view contact and calendar information, it plans to implement federation for voice as well. That means employees can call or launch a conference with any federated contact with a single click. JJ will also implement Lync Mobile as soon as it is available.

Benefits

By deploying Lync Server 2010, JJ can maximize its communications solution to improve productivity and help make its business more efficient.

Improved Daily Productivity 20 Percent

JJ saw productivity gains with the deployment of Office Communications Server, but the enhancements in the Lync Server and client will help it improve productivity. With the ad hoc collaboration and online meeting capabilities available through Lync, employees can easily book meetings or set up conference calls on the fly, without having to switch between applications to view contacts and resources. They can also share a desktop and a white board with a single click.

Presence has been an important productivity tool for employees at JJ, and with the Activity Feed and Location features in Lync, employees have even more information about their contacts that

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makes it easier for them to reach out to the right person at the right time. Because JJ has integrated presence information into Microsoft Dynamics AX, call center agents especially can more easily find people to answer questions, which means that customers are not kept waiting. Using Skill Search, employees have an even better way to find experts and decision makers within the organization. Federating voice along with contact and calendar information will also help JJ employees be more productive, because they can instantly place a call or start an online meeting.

Developing custom applications for Lync Server using APIs will also help improve productivity and efficiency across the board. By being able to view the "presence" of its servers in the network and conduct messaging sessions with them, the IT team can be more proactive when it comes to network health, which saves everyone time in the long run.

"We will definitely see productivity gains by deploying Lync Server," says Kiamil. "That's time our employees can spend managing customers and working with our partners."

Removed Barriers to Communication

Kiamil believes that its Microsoft communications solution has removed communication barriers for employees. "The instant messaging and presence capabilities in Lync Server especially remove barriers. People feel more comfortable messaging when they see someone is available, no matter what time of day, which means they reach out more often," he explains.

Federation between JJ and its partners has also made communication more transparent. "Sometimes it can be very difficult to get in touch with people from

different organizations because you don't have their calendar information," says Kiamil. "Because we can see people's presence information through federation, we can more easily get ahold of people." Having presence and instant messaging capabilities have also helped the JJ field sales representatives feel more connected to their colleagues back at the office. "Before we had our Microsoft communications solution in place, our sales people felt isolated," says Kiamil. "Because they can see my presence, I hear from them more now than I ever did."

Lync 2010 enhancements like the Activity Feed and the integration with other Microsoft solutions also help increase communication. "With the integration Lync capabilities like Skill Search and the Activity Feed in other Microsoft solutions, we have social networking for the business," says Kiamil. "It makes colleagues feel closer, and it brings more enjoyment to the workplace."

Eased Configuration and Management

JJ was impressed with the deployment tools available for Lync Server like the Topology Builder, which companies can use to design their final topology and configuration settings before beginning deployment. "Our deployment is pretty simple and not much different than what we had before, but the Topology Builder is a great tool. In fact, I suggested it to another Microsoft product team for use in their product," says Kiamil.

The company was also pleased that it could deploy Lync Server 2010 in a virtual, highly available environment. "It's great that Lync Server supports virtualization of all of the server roles, because virtualization makes the deployment much easier to manage," says Kiamil.

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 in the United States and Canada who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234. 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 JJ Food Service Limited products and services, call (44) 8719 730 999 or visit the website at:

www.jjfoodservice.com

For more information about Plantronics products and services, call (800) Plantronics or visit the website at:

www.plantronics.com



By deploying Lync Server, JJ Food Service is achieving its goal to continuously improve employee productivity so that it can to succeed in a very competitive industry.

Microsoft Lync Server 2010

Microsoft Lync Server 2010 ushers in a new connected user experience that transforms every communication into an interaction that is more collaborative, and engaging and that is accessible from anywhere. For IT, the benefits are equally powerful, with a highly secure and reliable communications system that works with existing tools and systems for easier management, lower cost of ownership, smoother deployment and migration, and greater choice and flexibility.

For more information about Microsoft Lync Server 2010, go to:

www.microsoft.com/lync

Software and Services

- Microsoft Dynamics
 - Microsoft Dynamics AX 2009
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Lync 2010
 - Microsoft Office 2010

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Lync Server 2010
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2010
 - Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010

Hardware

- Plantronics Voyager PRO Headsets