

Mirapoint in the Enterprise: Customer Success Stories



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Introduction

Enterprises have come to rely on email to keep in touch with geographically dispersed employees, customers, and suppliers to facilitate decision making, boost productivity, and provide competitive advantage. But many of today's messaging solutions come with a high cost of ownership and marginal reliability.

Traditional systems are often piecemeal solutions made up of hardware and software components from multiple vendors that complicate day-to-day management and limit their scalability and flexibility. In the past there were few alternatives since only very few companies including Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes offered solutions for enterprise email—but these solutions were often too costly and, with limited scalability, grew to be unmanageable and often unreliable. In addition, enterprises had to turn to other sources for some advanced features adding to the complexity and maintenance costs, creating a high total cost of ownership.

Expanding or adding new services such as webmail, wireless messaging, and calendaring required the integration of more hardware and software. Without the internal resources available, IT departments had to turn to vendors' professional services groups to implement and integrate a custom service. Such multivendor solutions could also present security implications.

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Enterprises need to build their message networks around security, reliability, and advanced email services. Mirapoint offers robust, purpose-built, integrated software and hardware systems optimized for messaging services. By eliminating the complications of managing traditional multivendor products, the Mirapoint approach provides a single, integrated solution with a wide variety of messaging services that can be managed easily and securely.

Mirapoint's messaging components are both flexible and modular to work seamlessly within an organization's current infrastructure, leveraging existing investments including standards-based clients and servers. Scaling is as easy as adding another Mirapoint system as email volume or users grow—resulting in lower total cost of ownership (TCO) over the life of the system.

Mirapoint's comprehensive messaging solution makes good business sense for enterprises large and small. Enterprises worldwide have selected Mirapoint solutions for their message networks. This case study looks at five of those enterprises, the challenges they faced, and why they chose Mirapoint as their messaging solution. Included in this study are Illinois Tool Works, Centra Health, Hassett Air Express, and Cisco Systems.

Mirapoint Delivers Security & Reliability

According to Gartner Group research, over 80% of all computer viruses enter a company's network through email, with the typical virus infection costing an organization up to \$500,000 per incident. Spam, too, has become a costly problem for enterprises today, accounting for as much as 40% of the total volume of Internet traffic.

Mirapoint has partnered with industry leader, Sophos, to provide integrated protection against virus threats. Using technology from Sophos, Mirapoint's Message Server and Message Director can rapidly deliver virus filtering for all incoming and outgoing messages that can be managed from the unified Mirapoint administration interfaces.

Mirapoint also provides powerful Full-Spectrum™ technology to block spam, including capabilities for blocking known users and domains and support for real-time blackhole lists (RBLs). Mirapoint is the only vendor that offers personalized spam controls, such as individual black/white lists and content filters, so end users can better manage their incoming email and define what is and what is not spam. For additional spam defense, Mirapoint supports Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) authentication to guarantee only approved users can send email through the Mirapoint gateway. Mirapoint's integrated anti-spam features dramatically improve overall email performance and system reliability by reducing the resources wasted on unsolicited emails.

New laws have been enacted in recent years regulating the archival and protection of email messages for financial, healthcare, and other types of businesses. Mirapoint systems can integrate with archival solutions for storing critical information and offers disaster recovery, and policy enforcement features to help enterprises comply with regulations and ensure the privacy and security of communications.

A large financial institution, for example, has deployed a Mirapoint business continuity solution for messaging. In the event of a 911-like disaster, the solution quickly brings the firm's top 10,000 executives online, which includes restoring historical email, calendar, and address book information. Also included are integrated spam and virus protection, as well as web and wireless access. The firm estimates a cost savings in the millions versus the Microsoft Exchange-based alternative.

Following are three enterprises that are benefiting from Mirapoint's security features including anti-virus and anti-spam protection.



Background

Illinois Tool Works, Inc., headquartered in Glenview, Illinois, (ranked 197 on the Fortune 500) is a \$9 billion diversified manufacturer of highly engineered components, industrial systems, and consumables. The company consists of approximately 600 decentralized operations in 43 countries and employs over 50,000 people. Operating autonomously, each business unit selected its own messaging solution. Some have AOL or Hotmail. Others have chosen third-party hosting through Sprint or Quest. Still others have Microsoft Exchange as their in-house solution.

Challenge

While not abandoning its autonomous culture, ITW was driven to provide a higher level of security for its financial payroll and human resource information traveling through email by deploying an enterprise-wide virtual private network (VPN). The company wanted a messaging solution that would allow business units to retain some autonomy, letting them have control over their domains, add and delete their own users, and enforce their own policies and spam filtering. The solution also had to be scalable, easy to manage, and most important, provide security.

Solution

ITW considered two solutions, Microsoft Exchange and Mirapoint. "We liked Mirapoint's 'all-in-one' solution," says Marc Palano, director of IT for ITW. "It not only offered a message store, but spam and virus filtering as well. It was future-proofed. It was Wireless Access Protocol (WAP) enabled and had Extensible Markup Language (XML) applications: all the features we were looking for in a mail server."

Installed in June 2002, the Mirapoint system, consisting of two Message Servers and two Message Directors, now supports about 6000 email users. Another 2000 have retained their existing email servers, but rely on the Mirapoint Message Directors for virus and spam filtering. "We've been able to reduce spam by more than 80 percent," says Palano.

ITW leverages the delegated domain administration feature from Mirapoint that allows its individual business units to administer, manage, and control their own email domains, yet partition system management and service availability to ITW's centralized corporate group. Each business unit, for example, can set its own spam filters and black and white lists. "That's important for us because that's the spirit of ITW: decentralized and autonomous" says Palano. "Yet, at the same time, by centralizing email, controlling all the mail here, it plays right into our VPN strategy."

Illinois Tool Works

ITW has many cell phone, PDA, and BlackBerry users that rely on Mirapoint's IMAP capabilities to access their mail from wherever they are. "All they need is Internet access and the user experience on the road is the exact same user experience they have at the office," says Palano. "Because the messages are kept on the server and not on the laptop, the speed of the laptop is increased. And if the laptop is lost, stolen, or crashes, users won't lose their messages. It also enables corporate IT to better enforce mail storage policies."

Business units that have taken advantage of the Mirapoint system have been pleased with the outcome. A survey taken by the IT group prior to deployment of the Mirapoint system revealed that local messaging system administrator's were most concerned about daily backups, administrative tasks, and downtime over the weekend. "By bringing them into the central system, we have eliminated their top three headaches," says Palano.

Palano and local systems administrators alike have been pleased with the reliability of the Mirapoint system. "Since it went in, we've had zero downtime. Talk about the 5-9s of availability," says Palano. That level of performance has encouraged a growing number of business units to give up their local systems. "We are not pressuring any business units to come onto the Mirapoint system, but we have actually had units shut down their Exchange servers." That enthusiasm has spread overseas as the first international business unit migrated to the Mirapoint system in June, citing the system's bilingual capability as a key feature.

Background

Centra Health is a regional, not-for-profit healthcare system located in the heart of Central Virginia with more than 3000 skilled healthcare professionals providing comprehensive medical services. The core of their messaging system is an IBM Lotus Notes email server. Until late 2002, they also had a Unix server for message routing and another server running IBM Secure Network Gateway firewall and Symantec virus scanning software.

“The existing four-year-old solution became increasingly unreliable and difficult to manage,” said Steve Higgins, Network Engineer at Centra Health. The aging Unix server hardware and software used for message routing and virus scanning required more frequent reboots.

Challenge

As the demands of keeping the ailing system running increased, spam was also becoming a serious problem. “Most users will at least look at the messages, which takes time that adds up, impacting overall productivity throughout the organization,” says Higgins. It was clear that something had to be done. What they needed was a system that was simple, reliable, and secure.

Solution

In early 2002 they began the search for a replacement that was easy to set up, ease to use, and easy to manage; one that could provide effective virus scanning, spam filtering, and the flexibility to add capabilities in the future.

Centra Health considered Mirapoint and Sendmail for Windows. “The complexity of configuring Sendmail was much greater than Mirapoint,” says Jody Hobbs, Lead Network Engineer at Centra Health. “One of Mirapoint’s key benefits was ease of setup. Mirapoint also provided a broader set of security features at a better value and gave us the flexibility to add features in the future.”

Deployed in the fall of 2002 to front-end the existing Notes server, the Mirapoint Message Director consolidated the message routing and virus scanning servers into a single, more manageable solution. It includes Mirapoint’s message routing, virus filtering, spam protection, content filters, and domain-level black and white lists to manage email traffic. “Once we migrated everyone to the Mirapoint system, the only thing our users noticed was they had less spam in their mailbox,” says Hobbs. “It was a seamless transition.”

The virus and spam capabilities have proven very effective. “We’ve caught over 1300 viruses this year, and we’re also blocking between 5500 and 6000 spam messages a day,” says Higgins. “That many messages adds up over a month’s time, so it saves us money because we don’t need as much disk space. Of course, it increases the productivity of our people too.”

Not only was the solution easy to deploy, but it has been easy to manage as well. “We can administer the system from any workstation through a web browser,” says Hobbs. “Before we had to go to the Unix server and use the command line interface.” Overall management has been reduced to less than an hour a day, mostly related to simple questions from users about how the spam protection works. Reliability, too, has improved dramatically over the legacy system. “Overall, I would say it’s been excellent,” says Hobbs. “Mirapoint has enabled us to consolidate from multiple servers to one appliance. It has also given us the ability to effectively filter spam as well as ease of use and management, which we didn’t have before.”

Background

Founded as a moving company in 1920, Hassett Air Express, headquartered in Elmhurst, Illinois, has been the largest air freight forwarder of time-sensitive printed materials since 1975 and is ranked among the top five domestic customers of United, American, and Delta Airlines. For years the company had been using OpenMail as their messaging system, running FineLine, a text-based interface that did not allow users to see attachments. When they began converting from dumb terminals to PCs, they installed a popper to allow users access to attachments and Microsoft Outlook Express.

With the PCs came viruses. “With only a few PCs, the problem was manageable, but by the time we had 25 PCs we knew we had to address the issue of virus scanning system-wide rather than at the individual client level,” says Adina Iclozan, System Support Administrator at Hassett. “With the rapid proliferation of new viruses, it became difficult to depend on each employee to keep his or her PC updated with the latest virus definitions. Our technical team spent a lot of time chasing potential virus incidents, resulting in network disruptions and lost productivity.”

Challenge

The Hassett team wanted to replace the backend email system. In addition to virus issues, there were several other requirements driving their selection process, including: 1) providing an easy-to-use interface that required minimal training, 2) providing a web interface option that could be accessed outside the office, 3) no increase in system administration and, 4) cost.

Solution

Iclozan and her team received approval to research and evaluate new solutions. She considered several options including Microsoft Exchange, a software solution running on Linux, and Mirapoint. “We have a very small IT group, so we didn’t want anything that required a lot of administration,” says Iclozan. “Exchange and the Linux systems were not an option.”

Hassett Air deployed a Mirapoint solution for its 200 users to catch the viruses at the gateway instead of at the desktop. “It went relatively smooth,” recalls Iclozan. About four months after installation, they got a virus. “I changed the automatic virus definition update from once daily to hourly and we’ve never had another virus,” says Iclozan. “The Mirapoint virus protection gives us peace of mind and reduces technical support hours.”

Hassett Air also uses the webmail capabilities of the Mirapoint solution. Most Hassett Customer Service Representatives use this solution instead of Outlook. Representatives may periodically move to a different location/PC to assist another team member. “We love webmail because we don’t have to copy address books or e-mail folders from one machine to another,” says Iclozan.

Hassett Air Express

“Our corporate directors have BlackBerrys,” says Iclozan. Using their Mirapoint account, Hassett’s users can forward messages to their BlackBerry devices. As they look to the future, Hassett will consider implementing a calendaring feature through Mirapoint.

The Mirapoint solution has met every expectation defined by Hassett Air Express. “System administration usually takes approximately one to two hours per week, and overall, the reliability has been exceptional. We are very satisfied with our decision to implement Mirapoint,” says Iclozan.

Mirapoint Means Services

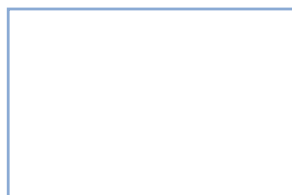
META Group conducted an online survey of IT and line-of-business personnel at 387 organizations. Eighty percent of the business people surveyed believe email is more valuable than the telephone for business communications, while 74 percent of respondents said it would be more of a hardship to be without email for five days than to be without the phone for that long.

Like the phone, which has evolved rich new features like voice mail and unified messaging, email has also become feature rich to meet the demanding needs of users. Today's users seek robust features such as calendaring, address book, and to-do lists built into their messaging service. They also want to access email via the Web, their cell phones, or PDAs. But they don't want the inconvenience of spam that wastes their time, or the hazards of viruses that can infect their computers. Most of all, they want these features to be reliable and easy to use.

Mirapoint provides a comprehensive solution that meets the demanding needs of enterprise users. Built into the Mirapoint systems are flexible webmail and wireless messaging capabilities as well as calendaring, address book, to-do list, virus scanning, and anti-spam features. Many enterprise users rely on Microsoft Outlook. Mirapoint integrates with Outlook, eliminating the need to migrate users to another application. The fully integrated approach makes features easy to use and highly reliable with a proven 99.999% availability. The ability to rapidly deploy Mirapoint systems and streamline management results in lower total cost of ownership (TCO).

Mirapoint has the enterprise-class scalability to handle potentially millions of emails per day and support hundreds of thousands of users. While providing sophisticated features and capabilities to knowledge workers, it can also provide email to deskless workers and non-traditional users who are accessing email for the first time.

Following is one enterprise example that is benefiting from Mirapoint's robust messaging service-delivery platform.



Background

Cisco Systems, Inc. is the worldwide leader in networking for the Internet. Early on, the company recognized the need to develop intranet-based applications that allow it to scale to meet the needs of its expanding workforce and to encourage its employees to work smarter and bring products to market more quickly. Cisco had been using Sun Microsystems servers with Sendmail freeware and Qpopper software to provide intranet-based messaging email services for its Engineering organizations.

Challenge

By 1999, exponential growth of the company had stretched the legacy email solution to its limit. The performance of the general-purpose servers was slow and unpredictable. "We were using low-end servers or glorified desktops," says Eric Latchford, System Administrator at Cisco. "You can't expect impressive performance out of them." In addition, POP (Post Office Protocol) and IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol) users were leaving mail on the servers because they needed access from a variety of locations including work and home, causing users to consume so much storage that overall performance suffered.

At first, Cisco attempted to resolve performance problems with more hardware, adding servers to reduce the number of users per server. But adding larger, more powerful mail servers cost more, not only in hardware purchases, but in on-going maintenance. "It required a great deal of time and effort to deploy the equipment at each remote site, tune it for performance, and deal with glitches on a regular basis," says Latchford. "And anytime you have a Unix system like we had, you need a systems administrator to manage it."

What Cisco needed was a high-performance, low-maintenance messaging solution.

Solution

In 1999, Cisco selected Mirapoint to provide messaging to its Engineering groups throughout the company. Mirapoint was chosen for performance, ease of deployment, reduced administrative costs, and the flexibility to provide a wide range of services.

Users experienced an immediate performance boost with the Mirapoint systems in place. System administrators also noticed a difference. Deploying and managing remote systems became much easier. "Because it's an appliance, you don't need the expertise of a system administrator to install and maintain it," says Latchford. "We can have a Mirapoint system out of the box, sitting on a shelf, power it up, configure the half-dozen parameters, and have it talking on the network in ten minutes. And with the old system, we would need to either hire a system administrator to manage two or three servers, or leave the site unsupported."

Cisco Systems

Cisco eventually deployed nearly 50 Mirapoint systems to support Engineering groups around the world. In mid-2002, the company began migrating these systems to Mirapoint's latest generation Message Server platform. With the migration complete by mid-2003, more than 15,000 users are supported on 15 Mirapoint systems companywide. "Management has gotten even better as we've moved to the new hardware," says Latchford.

Management support is largely centralized. "We ask local administrators to make sure the hardware lights aren't flashing red and do the daily backups, and we'll administer the system from here," says Latchford. "If Mirapoint issues an MOS update, I can do global OS upgrades on every system in a weekend."

Latchford is currently piloting a method that allows front-line support technicians to do message restores for users via a web interface on the corporate intranet. If a user loses a day or even weeks of messages because their laptop was lost or damaged, they can call the support line and request copies from the backup files. "That type of request has always been a sizable part of the job for the local administrator," says Latchford. "We can offload that task for them."

Cisco is already using the webmail feature for some of its remote contractors. Webmail enables them to easily access email through a web-based client rather than requiring a desk client.

With migration to new systems nearly complete, Latchford expects overall management of Mirapoint systems to require a minimal amount of time. "All the Mirapoint systems, which support a quarter of our total company, will be managed by a single person, and it won't even be a full-time job. Mirapoint has made our job easier and allowed us to focus our reactive efforts in areas where we don't have a choice but to be reactive, like spam and viruses."

Conclusion

In today's highly competitive environment, enterprises must find new ways to raise productivity levels without increasing operating expenses. Mirapoint's success in enterprises around the globe demonstrates the reliability and effectiveness of our solutions. Companies have selected Mirapoint for its ability to offer security and a full range of features.

Mirapoint's robust messaging services provide a comprehensive solution with flexible webmail and wireless messaging as well as calendaring, address book, to-do list, virus scanning, and anti-spam protection. The fully integrated approach makes features easy to use and highly reliable with proven 99.999% availability.

Mirapoint simplifies message delivery and management with a fully integrated platform that eliminates the complications associated with traditional messaging services deployment and management and makes it easy for organizations to add or integrate functionality.

Finally, Mirapoint secures message networks through integrated virus and spam protection. Whether your enterprise is looking to secure its current mail system, offer email services to deskless or non-traditional users at affordable prices, or to completely replace your existing mail solution for increased reliability, security and services—Mirapoint is the right solution!

For more information on how Mirapoint can improve the security and service delivery of your message network, visit our Web site at www.mirapoint.com, or call us at 408-720-3700.

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