



Del Monte Foods Expects to Reduce Costs with Unified Communications

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Consumer goods manufacturing

Customer Profile

Based in San Francisco, California, Del Monte Foods makes food products for families and their pets. With as many as 17,000 employees during peak seasons, Del Monte earned revenues of U.S.\$3 billion in 2006.

Business Situation

Del Monte Foods uses disparate solutions for e-mail, voice mail, faxing, and conferencing. The lack of integration makes IT management complex and time-consuming.

Solution

The company is deploying Microsoft® Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging and plans to deploy Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 as part of a unified-communications solution.

Benefits

- Enhanced productivity
- Improved information sharing
- Simplified IT administration
- Reduced IT and travel costs

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Dennis Tokarski, Manager of Telecommunications, Del Monte Foods

Del Monte Foods, a leading food company, is upgrading from Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 to Exchange Server 2007 with Unified Messaging to enable the unification of e-mail with voice mail in a single inbox. Del Monte hired Berbee, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to implement Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging so a comparison can be done with the existing voice-mail system's unified-messaging features. It also plans to deploy Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 for presence, instant messaging, and Web conferencing. Del Monte expects the unified messaging and communications to further increase productivity, improve information sharing, and simplify IT management.

“With Office Communications Server 2007, we’ll be able to check everybody’s availability, what their schedules are, and whether it’s best to reach them by phone, e-mail, or instant message.”

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Situation

Del Monte Foods produces, distributes, and markets premium-quality branded food and pet products for the U.S. retail market. The company generated approximately U.S.\$3 billion in sales in 2006, and it employs 17,000 people during peak seasons, including 8,900 seasonal workers. With 18 distribution centers and 22 production facilities, Del Monte covers a broad geographical area that includes North and South America, Mexico, and American Samoa.

In 2006, Del Monte began an upgrade from Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 to Exchange Server 2007 to streamline IT tasks and improve the productivity of mobile workers. The company has about 2,000 highly mobile employees, including salespeople and executives. IT and engineering staff also travel frequently, visiting company locations during peak seasons to keep machinery and IT infrastructure up and running.

The messaging upgrade will be complete by the fourth quarter of 2007. Currently, Del Monte has 11 HP ProLiant DL580 server computers running either Exchange Server 2003 or Exchange Server 2007 in four locations—San Francisco, California; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Ecuador; and American Samoa.

Exchange Server 2007 has already increased employee and IT operational efficiency by making it easier for mobile workers to access their messaging information and by simplifying the process for creating and deleting user accounts. Del Monte wants to build on the solution by unifying e-mail and voice mail with Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging and by taking advantage of the instant messaging and conferencing features of Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007. “We want to stay on top of the most

current offerings in communications technology,” says Dennis Tokarski, Manager of Telecommunications at Del Monte Foods. “Collaboration, unified messaging, and presence are going to become a staple for our communications world moving forward.”

The company uses a third-party voice-mail system that provides unified messaging. The solution, however, doesn’t integrate with Exchange Server, so it requires separate servers, software, management time, and licensing. Del Monte also uses another third-party solution for faxing and pays for hosted conferencing services.

The company wanted an integrated solution that would provide unified messaging and communication.

Solution

Del Monte decided to deploy Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging in a test environment. Exchange Server Unified Messaging delivers voice and fax messages to users’ inboxes along with e-mail, calendar, contact, and task data. By using unified-messaging support in Exchange Server 2007, Tokarski says, the company could get the most out of its existing software investment and take an important step in its plan to fully integrate communications.

In April 2007, the company hired Berbee, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, to help compare the unified-messaging capabilities of Exchange Server with those offered by the existing voice-mail solution. In May, a team that included three people from Del Monte, four from Berbee, and two from Microsoft began the comparison with a group of 30 users. They tested how the solutions work with the company’s Private Branch Exchange (IP-PBX) system, Cisco CallManager Version 4.1. Del Monte plans to continue the testing in July and after it upgrades to version 5.1 of the Cisco product later in 2007.

Del Monte is also working with Berbee to deploy Microsoft Office Live Communications Server 2005, which delivers instant messaging and presence for real-time communications. The company expects to deploy Live Communications Server 2005 companywide in July 2007. "Once that's in production and we're comfortable everything is where it needs to be, then we'll upgrade our lab environment to Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007," says Tokarski. He expects testing of Office Communications Server 2007, which is the successor to Live Communications Server 2005, to begin in September 2007. Production deployment is anticipated for early 2008.

Office Communications Server 2007 incorporates software-powered voice over IP (VoIP), so users can make, receive, and manage phone calls using Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 running on their computers. It also offers improvements to instant messaging and presence, and it provides an on-premise version of Microsoft Office Live Meeting for Web conferencing.

Employees will be able to use the new collaboration features along with familiar applications in Microsoft Office Professional 2007 and a company portal based on Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003. Matt Riley, a Microsoft Consultant at Berbee, says, "When you take it beyond unified communications to the next level, such a major change becomes compelling. The benefit to the user population is gaining enhanced presence and workflow throughout the Microsoft applications they use."

Benefits

By deploying a unified-communications solution, Del Monte Foods expects to improve productivity through easy access to information and collaboration tools. The company says integration will simplify IT

management tasks and reduce total cost of ownership.

Enhanced Productivity

The Unified Messaging server role in Exchange Server 2007, along with the range of communications options provided by Office Communications Server 2007, will give the mobile work force at Del Monte powerful new tools to make their time on the road more productive. Exchange Server Unified Messaging delivers all messages, whether fax, e-mail, or voice mail, to the e-mail inbox for fast retrieval. "Just being notified that we have voice mail in Exchange Server 2007 is a big help," Tokarski says, "let alone being able to access those messages through our e-mail. It gives us real-time communications. With Exchange Server 2007, employees are in real time with what's going on."

With the Microsoft Office Outlook® Voice Access feature in Exchange Server Unified Messaging, employees are able to use a phone to not only listen to voice mail in their inboxes, but also act on their e-mail, calendar, and contact information—through voice recognition and text-to-speech technology. In addition, by using the Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access component of Exchange Server 2007, employees will get just about all the messaging functionality of their office environment from any computer connected to the Internet.

With Live Communications Server 2005 in place, Del Monte employees will use presence features to know when coworkers and customers are available, and they will be able to communicate with them immediately using the optimal method. Office Communications Server 2007 will give Del Monte the ability to integrate its PBX system into its presence and instant messaging technologies. Employees will be able to initiate an instant messaging session, escalate it to a computer-based phone call

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with a click of the mouse, and invite others to join by dragging their names from the contacts list.

“It’s very difficult not knowing where everybody is at a given time,” Tokarski says. “With Office Communications Server 2007, we’ll be able to check everybody’s availability, what their schedules are, and whether it’s best to reach them by phone, e-mail, or instant message. It will allow everybody to come together much easier.”

Improved Information Sharing

With Exchange Server 2007 Unified Messaging, Del Monte will have easier, more flexible access to voice mail, e-mail, and faxes. For example, employees will be able to forward, respond to, and archive voice and fax messages as if they were e-mail. They will have the ability to add notes to voice-mail messages. And with voice messages visible in the inbox, it won’t be necessary to listen to them in order, so employees can prioritize and respond with the most effective method.

Office Communications Server 2007 will make it possible for Del Monte employees to collaborate more easily and through more modes of communication. For example, employees will be able to initiate impromptu conferences with multiple participants, right from their computers. They can use features such as conferencing and instant messaging from inside the Microsoft Office applications they work with every day, such as Microsoft Office Word and Office Excel® spreadsheet software.

Del Monte expects the improved collaboration to help coworkers stay informed, foster new ideas, and generate sales. “Different sales and marketing teams dealing with different customers can share information across markets,” Tokarski says. “And as long as there is a person on the ground in a given location, we can gain

access to markets our competitors may not yet have reached.”

With the federation features available through Office Communications Server 2007, Del Monte can offer customers and vendors the same access and presence notification used by its employees. A federated vendor will be able to see if a particular person or group within Del Monte is available, and how best to make contact. The same possibilities also exist for impromptu meetings and information sharing. “Federation will be huge,” Tokarski says. “We’ll be able to tie in select vendors and customers directly, so we’ll be available to them and they’ll be available to us, in real time.”

Simplified IT Administration

With separate solutions for e-mail, voice mail, and call routing, IT responsibilities at Del Monte are complicated and time-consuming. “We have to manage the PBX, we have to manage the voice mail, we have to manage the e-mail,” Tokarski says. “Full integration will allow us to bring it all together and administrate it all from one place.” For example, creating and deleting user accounts will be much simpler. “It’s a lot easier to add or remove user profiles from one location in Exchange Server 2007,” Tokarski says. “Rather than having one person set up the e-mail accounts and another set up the voice mail accounts on a separate system, we want it integrated so when we set up the e-mail, the voice mail is done.”

Reduced IT and Travel Costs

By using an integrated solution based on Microsoft technology, Del Monte expects to lower licensing, conferencing, and travel costs.

A full implementation of Exchange Server Unified Messaging would save Del Monte money on licensing costs for its existing voice-mail system because Exchange Server

Unified Messaging is covered under its existing licensing agreement. Tokarski says the company could also reduce third-party conferencing costs by using the locally stored version of Microsoft Office Live Meeting available with Office Communication Server 2007. "We could use our internal infrastructure to provide the conferencing services where necessary, saving the cost on that per user, per minute charge that we would normally get with the hosted service."

Tokarski also estimates Del Monte can reduce travel costs for its engineers and IT personnel by using Office Communications Server 2007. Engineers often need to be onsite at production facilities during season startup times—and sometimes at several locations in a short period—when machinery goes into operation. IT personnel travel between facilities to handle issues with networking, client applications, and servers. "We should be able to send one support person to handle a problem instead of a whole team," Tokarski says, "because that person can easily work with the rest of the team if he or she needs to."

If engineers have problems, they can notify their superiors or get input from other engineers through instant messaging, and they can collaborate to fix problems faster. With Office Communications Server 2007, IT professionals can use presence to find out who might be available to help and make contact with that person instantly. With SharePoint Portal Server 2003, engineers and IT professionals can access information stored on company servers. That can help shorten their time at a given location. "Higher-level technicians might not need to be sent to a site because they could have this real-time communication," Tokarski says. "They can be doing multiple tasks as opposed to being at one site doing one task. That allows for broader use of advanced skill sets,

and makes real-world training possible in the field."

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Hardware

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Partners

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