



Consolidated email infrastructure improves communication, reduces costs and simplifies management

Working alongside Esteem, the University of Salford implemented a new consolidated, stable email platform for over 2,500 staff, improving cross-departmental communication and increasing the efficiency of employees. In addition, the new platform has simplified email management and significantly reduced costs.



The University of Salford:

The University of Salford has over 2,500 staff and 18,000 students studying more than 500 different courses. Salford is internationally recognised as an enterprising university which has close links with industry in its teaching, research and learning approach. Nearly 3,000 international students from over 100 different countries are also enrolled in the University's 14 schools and 13 research institutes.

The Challenge:

The University of Salford recognises that their email system is critical to the way staff communicate both with each other, and with students and other institutions. However at the outset, the University was faced with an outdated and unstable email infrastructure which saw different faculties using different versions of the Outlook and Pegasus email systems. As a result, the email infrastructure was time consuming and costly to maintain and restricted the way employees could work, making cross departmental collaboration difficult.

In addition, the business critical nature of email meant that University staff increasingly needed to access email remotely, whilst away at conferences or other universities around the world. The University's existing email infrastructure did not support this method of working and again this was beginning to restrict the way staff could work.

The University recognised that it needed to consolidate and standardise its email system onto a single platform in order to provide a reliable and effective means of communication for staff. In addition, the University decided to implement an email archiving system and to standardise the desktop applications available to staff across all departments.

The University knew from the outset that implementing a new email platform and standardising the desktops of 2,500 users would be challenging in itself. They also recognised that the physical spread of both buildings and users across the large University campus would add to the challenge. In addition, staff needed access to email 24x7 meaning that email downtime would need to be kept to an absolute minimum.

With so many users to be migrated to the new email platform, the University also needed to gain the trust of the users and understand how they worked in order to ensure the solution met their individual needs.

Martine Carassik, Associate Director of the Information Systems Unit at Salford, said: "We realised that our email system was beginning to restrict the way employees were working and it was also becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to manage. We knew that the sheer number and geographical spread of the users would mean this was a challenging project, but we needed to do it to enable the University to maintain its world class status."

Esteem Systems:

With many years experience of working alongside higher education organisations, Esteem Systems has the ability to assist universities to address their long-term teaching and learning objectives through the provision of tailored IT infrastructure solutions.

Esteem specialises in providing a comprehensive range of IT infrastructure services designed to enable customers to maximise their IT investment throughout its lifecycle. These services include project services such as design, consultancy, implementation and training; and ongoing managed services such as server, desktop, storage and network management.

Consolidated email infrastructure improves communication, reduces costs and simplifies management



Solution Overview:

Software:

- Microsoft Exchange 2003
- Windows 2003 Active Directory
- Windows XP
- Outlook Web Access
- Quest Archive Manager software

Lifecycle Services:

- Design
- Consultancy
- Project Management
- Installation & Roll Out
- User Acceptance Testing
- Skills Transfer

Benefits:

- Greater reliability
- Improved efficiency
- Higher quality of service for users
- Reduced cost of operation
- Improved management of data storage
- Improved enablement of directory management, group and mass emailing
- Standardising working practices across University departments
- Increased security
- Ease of management

“Esteem installed the new infrastructure to time and within budget and effectively project managed the changes. They reacted to unforeseen problems, and their accelerated migration of data helped to minimise risk.”

case study



The Business Solution:

The University of Salford had worked alongside Esteem Systems previously and knew the organisation had a good understanding of higher education needs, as well as the technical expertise to provide an effective solution. After initial discussions, the University asked Esteem to review its existing email system and design a new world class email infrastructure; create an effective email archiving solution and upgrade the software available on users' desktops.

After a thorough consultation process, Esteem used its knowledge of Microsoft technology to design and implement a new, central email infrastructure based on Windows 2003 Active Directory and Exchange 2003, with an associated email archiving solution based on Quest Archive Manager software.

Once the new infrastructure was implemented, Esteem then began the complex process of migrating both data and 2,500 users onto the new platform. The migration process required careful project management and Esteem undertook the majority of the work out of hours to ensure there was no loss of service to the University. As the migration process began, it became apparent that the University's existing email platform was in danger of failing. Esteem responded immediately by accelerating the migration to reduce any risk of data loss.

At the same time, the new email archiving solution was implemented which meant that going forward, emails that hadn't been accessed for a certain period of time would be automatically stored and then recalled to the main system as and when a user required access again.

As part of the roll out process, Esteem also upgraded 2,500 desktops across the University to Windows XP and users were given access to Outlook Web Access which meant that employees would have secure, mobile access to emails through any secure internet browser.

Esteem worked closely with the Information Systems Unit at the University of Salford to ensure a smooth project implementation and identify when data from different departments could be migrated to the new system. The project team and Esteem also worked together throughout the migration to manage employee expectations and created a User Engagement Strategy to ensure a smooth end-user experience.

“This was very much a joint project and Esteem had to work closely with our team. What Esteem provided was the project management; technical expertise and experience of implementing solutions of this nature; and the manpower to enable us to implement a project of this scale on time,” explained Martine Carassik.

“Esteem installed the new infrastructure to time and within budget and effectively project managed the changes. They reacted to unforeseen problems, and their accelerated migration of data helped to minimise risk.”

The Result:

The University of Salford now has a secure and robust email solution which is more efficient, offers a better quality of service and is less expensive to maintain. The University's IT Unit has more time to focus on planned future enhancements to the system, rather than fire-fighting the day to day problems of the various incompatible email systems previously in place.

Now that support and academic staff have access to an improved, single email system and a standard desktop, they have full interoperability across departments and can communicate more effectively. They are also now able to access collaborative tools such as online calendars, allowing staff to work closer together and improving efficiency across the University. The system is faster, more reliable and also allows them to access their emails securely, from any web browser anywhere in the world.

The archive solution allows the University's IT department to manage the data stored by staff more effectively. It has also allowed them to reinforce good practice when it comes to managing archiving and personal storage quotas.

Martine Carassik said: “The project wasn't just about changing the email platform, it was about standardising how departments work, giving them the tools to work more effectively right across the University. Esteem offered us a varied set of skills that other companies could not offer. They were prepared to work flexibly; they took on responsibility for additional tasks when required, whilst also working in partnership with our staff at other times.”

Martine concluded that: “This was a labour intensive project and a lot of work has been done on both sides. The people at Esteem are reliable, professional and friendly. We found them easy to do business with and are likely to call upon their services for new projects in the future.”