



Global Safety Company Complements Unified Communications Solution with Cloud-Based Messaging

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services

Customer Profile

UL (Underwriters Laboratories) provides safety testing and certification for a wide range of product categories. Over 20 billion UL marks appear on products all over the world.

Business Situation

UL had a disjointed technology environment for communications and collaboration. It wanted to replace outdated technology, like its IBM messaging and collaboration platform, with a more comprehensive solution to help grow the business.

Solution

UL deployed a Microsoft unified communications platform that includes a cloud-based messaging service through Microsoft Office 365, which provided better scalability and helped to reduce costs.

Benefits

- Reduce costs by 50 percent
- Support a virtual workplace
- Provide a flexible solution for growth

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UL (Underwriters Laboratories), a world leader in advancing safety is best known for testing and certifying a wide range of products such as life-saving devices, fire suppression equipment, light bulbs, and household appliances. UL has 68 facilities and 120 inspection centers, so the ability to communicate effectively from any location is critical. For messaging and collaboration, UL had deployed IBM Lotus Notes and Domino, but as its business grew globally, the company found its needs had exceeded the solution’s capabilities. As part of an initiative to provide a comprehensive unified communications solution, it decided to deploy a Microsoft communications and collaboration platform that included both on-premises solutions and Microsoft Office 365 cloud-based services. With this transition, UL reduced costs by 50 percent and provided a scalable platform that would grow with the company.

Situation

UL (Underwriters Laboratories), headquartered in Northbrook, Illinois, is a global independent safety science company that offers expertise across five strategic businesses: product safety, environment, life and health, verification services and training through UL University. UL is concerned with the safety aspects of all potentially hazardous products.

Not only does its testing and certification services involve 19,000 different products, materials, components and systems, (such as life-saving devices, fire suppression, fire containment, chemical vapors, and mechanical and automotive equipment), but the company has grown with the world's evolving safety needs to include testing, certification and verification of water, solar panels, and "green" products.

In recent years, UL began to realize that it had outgrown its current technology environment. Thomas Boxrud, Director of Enterprise Infrastructure Services at UL, explains, "In some areas, despite our impressive growth globally, we were really lagging in technology. We were still using a traditional PBX [private-branch exchange] phone system, and in terms of messaging and other technology services, we needed to operate in a more unified fashion to better serve our customers and help get safer products to market faster for our more than 66,000 customers."

For messaging and collaboration, UL had deployed IBM Lotus Notes and Domino, with servers in every global office, but the company felt it had outgrown the solution. "The best way to put it: we had become entangled. We had more than 300 custom applications running in Domino," says Boxrud. "We were at the point where we could not even upgrade, because we had customized it so much, and newer versions

would not support our global structure." In addition, even though UL had set generous mailbox quotas, employees frequently used their email inboxes to store more data than the limit allowed. As a result, servers would crash, which created more work for IT teams. UL wanted a messaging solution that would require less support but that would allow employees to store the data they need.

UL was also concerned about the lack of flexibility and scalability in its technology environment. The company had a strategy to grow the business, but it was concerned about how to grow the technology environment along with the rest of the organization. "If we added new employees during a merger or an acquisition, we would require more hardware and IT staff," says Boxrud. "We would also see increased data center costs, and we would have more to manage."

The company began an aggressive campaign to bring its technology solutions up to date. In its North American offices, it replaced its aging telephony system with a voice over IP (VoIP) solution from Avaya. As a part of its "desktop readiness" campaign, it also upgraded all employee computers to Windows 7, and it deployed Microsoft Office 2010 on the desktop for business productivity.

To provide enhanced communications capabilities for all employees, UL deployed Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 R2 on-premises, which provides presence information, instant messaging, and audio and video conferencing. It also connected Office Communications Server to its VoIP phone system to provide enterprise voice capabilities through the Microsoft Office Communicator 2007 client on the desktop. For collaboration and document management, the company

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decided to deploy Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010 on-premises to replace a portion of its outdated Domino environment. “With the migration to SharePoint Server, we saw the opportunity to review all of the applications we use and eliminate redundancy, which helps us decrease maintenance significantly,” says Boxrud.

Even with all the positive changes, UL still saw a few areas where it needed to improve. Perhaps the most important area was messaging. It considered switching from Lotus Notes and Domino to Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 on-premises to take advantage of the interoperation between Exchange Server, Office Communications Server, and SharePoint Server. Another reason for UL to deploy Exchange Server was its mobile platform. Many of its mobile employees used RIM BlackBerry devices, but the company found they wanted flexibility and not to rely exclusively with BlackBerry Enterprise Server. It wanted to transition employees to Active Sync devices, such as iPhone, Droid, and Windows 7 phones, to help reduce management and cost.

“Exchange Server offered us everything we had with Domino plus more,” says Boxrud. “And people are more familiar with using Microsoft Outlook. However, we saw a real opportunity with our messaging solution. We had been doing a lot of research and we had done the cost-benefit analysis—and we decided to move aggressively into the cloud.”

Solution

To begin its campaign to move email to the cloud, UL decided to pilot cloud-based services from Microsoft with the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite. As UL engaged with Microsoft, it learned about Microsoft Office 365, the

next generation of hosted services that combines the familiar Office desktop with enhanced cloud-based communication and collaboration services. It joined the Office 365 Rapid Deployment Program to test the suite of services, and ultimately decided to migrate its messaging solution from Lotus Notes and Domino to Microsoft Exchange Online.

To prepare for the transition to the cloud, UL restructured its Active Directory service. “We had 36 Active Directory domains, and we consolidated them into one global domain,” says Boxrud. It deployed Active Directory Federation Services to enable single sign-on, so that employees could use their existing Active Directory credentials to access Office Communications Server, SharePoint Server, or Exchange Online.

In addition, it deployed Active Directory Rights Management Services (AD RMS), an information protection technology in Windows Server 2008, to provide an additional layer of security to help protect sensitive company information. Information Rights Management (IRM) in Exchange Online uses AD RMS to apply a rights policy template to an email message. Usage rights are attached to the message itself, so that protection occurs online and offline, and inside and outside of an organization's firewall. IRM helps control who can access, forward, print, or copy sensitive data within an email. Employees can apply IRM protection through Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Web App, or administrators can apply it by using transport rules or Outlook protection rules.

UL worked with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Binary Tree, a leading provider of enterprise messaging migration and coexistence software, to migrate employee mailboxes and data into the cloud. With Exchange Online, employees have 25

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gigabytes of mailbox storage, but UL wanted to ensure that it would not repeat the same mistake of letting data get out of control. It created retention policies that automatically eliminate email content, so that employees do not have to delete old email manually. “We developed a new data retention policy,” says Boxrud. “We wanted to move very little data to Office 365. With Exchange Online, UL used retention policies to help employees adopt new habits. Now they can only keep data in Exchange Online for a specified time. They can use SharePoint and other tools to store files they need to keep beyond that.”

UL decided to keep its on-premises deployments of Office Communications Server 2007 R2 and SharePoint Server 2010, but it plans to transition both solutions to the cloud in the near future. In the meantime, the company has configured Exchange Online to interoperate with Office Communications Server and SharePoint Server. That way, employees can view presence information, start a chat, or initiate a conference from the Microsoft Outlook 2010 messaging and collaboration client. If they are working in a document in SharePoint Server, they can also view presence information for colleagues and send a quick email, without switching to Outlook to open a new message.

UL is in the process of moving many of its business applications from Domino to SharePoint Server. It is also using SharePoint Server for its intranet sites, to post documents, process workflows, and other company information for employees. “Eventually, we want to build customer-facing sites through SharePoint Online to provide documentation and other important information,” explains Boxrud. “As we consolidate internal applications, we will also move those capabilities to the cloud as well.”

By moving to Exchange Online, UL sees the opportunity to retire its BlackBerry Enterprise Server. Boxrud explains, “We plan to move more aggressively to using Active Sync devices, which gives employees more options for what device they want to carry.”

Benefits

With its transition to a Microsoft unified communications platform that includes both on-premises and hosted solutions, UL has brought its technology environment up-to-date and provided room for growth in the future. It has reduced costs and overall administration, without sacrificing key capabilities that keep its employees productive.

Reduce Costs by 50 Percent

UL has reduced costs a number of ways by implementing Microsoft solutions and services. “By moving to a Microsoft platform, we have reduced the cost for our unified communications environment by 50 percent,” says Boxrud. With smaller deployments and more consolidation of hardware and software, the Microsoft solutions require fewer people and less effort to manage.

By replacing its IBM messaging solution with Exchange Online, UL effectively eliminated costs for hardware, data centers, maintenance, upgrades, and administration at 50-plus offices around the world. “With Exchange Online, we can single-source all administration through one location,” says Boxrud. “We also completely eliminated our need for third-level support for messaging onsite, because we can rely on Microsoft to manage the infrastructure and maintenance.”

Because UL plans to support Active Sync devices and reduce dependencies on BlackBerry devices, it can also retire its

BlackBerry Enterprise Server to help reduce maintenance and administration costs. As it moves more solutions into the cloud, UL expects to reduce costs for hardware, maintenance, data centers, and administration even further.

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Support a Virtual Workplace

A big part of the company's campaign to bring technology up-to-date was its desire to create a virtual workplace for its employees. As long as employees have access to a broadband connection, they can stay in touch and stay productive. With the interoperation between Exchange Online, SharePoint Server, and Office Communications Server, employees can view presence information for and communicate with colleagues anywhere around the world. "With our Microsoft platform, we can provide anywhere, anytime capabilities for our employees, to help them be more productive at their jobs," says Boxrud.

Provide a Flexible Solution for Growth

UL believes that with Microsoft solutions in place, it can better support the company's growth. "Like many companies, a key business objective for us is growth through mergers and acquisitions," says Boxrud. "With hosted solutions like Office 365, when we bring new companies on board we will not have to buy new hardware or hire more people to manage more infrastructure. Instead, it takes a couple of clicks for us to add new people—a task that used to take weeks or months."

UL also believes that by having Microsoft solutions in place, it will be easier to find IT people and attract new employees. "Most people are familiar with Microsoft products, both from a user and a support standpoint," explains Boxrud. "With Lotus Notes, it was like stepping back in time."

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 UL products and services, call (877) 854-3577 or visit the website at:

www.ul.com

Microsoft Office 365

Microsoft Office 365 brings together cloud versions of our most trusted communications and collaboration products—Microsoft SharePoint Online, Exchange Online, and Lync Online—with the latest version of our Office desktop suite and companion web applications for businesses of all sizes.

Office 365 helps save time and money, and it frees up valued resources. Simple to use and easy to administer, it is financially backed by a service level agreement that guarantee 99 percent reliability. Office 365 features robust security, IT-level phone support, geo-redundancy, disaster recovery, and the business-class privacy controls and standards that you expect from a world-class service provider.

For more information about Microsoft Office 365, go to:

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