

COBWEB SOLUTIONS

Overview

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Professional services

Customer Profile

Cobweb delivers a range of outsourced managed IT services to 40,000 customers and is Europe's leading provider of hosted messaging services.

Business Situation

The company wanted to help its customers address growing e-mail data storage and management challenges and to comply more effectively with vertical industry and government legislation.

Solution

Cobweb created an e-mail storage and management solution based on ZANTAZ Enterprise Archive Solution, Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003, and Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003.

Benefits

- Increased storage efficiency and user productivity
- Reduced storage costs
- Improved compliance auditing
- Enhanced data security with centralized policies
- Guaranteed 99.5 percent service availability

E-Mail Management and Storage Challenges

“Using the new e-mail archiving solution, we can now retain the same volume of data on standard equipment at a tenth of the cost.”

Michael Frisby, Business Development Director, Cobweb Solutions

Cobweb is one of Europe's leading providers of hosted messaging services. To help customers address growing e-mail storage and management challenges, the company has deployed an archiving solution based on ZANTAZ Enterprise Archive Solution, Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003, and Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003. This solution saves a single copy of original e-mails and attachments in a centralized archive store and leaves text-only stubs in users' mailboxes. In doing so, it has increased the number of e-mails that can be stored in mailboxes by 50 to 60 percent and reduced storage costs by 90 percent. Customers can also store copies of e-mails sent and received to ensure regulatory compliance. In addition, Cobweb guarantees 99.5 percent availability for the service, which is the first managed e-mail archiving solution to be fully integrated with Exchange Server 2003 and Outlook 2003.

“Our solution allows far more e-mails to be accessed instantly from Outlook 2003, saving time, supporting more effective working, and significantly enhancing the user experience.”

Michael Frisby, Business Development Director, Cobweb Solutions

Situation

Cobweb is one of Europe's leading providers of hosted messaging services and was Microsoft Hosting Service Provider of the Year for 2004. Founded in 1996 to provide outsourced IT services to small and medium-sized businesses, the company operates data centers in London and Fareham in the United Kingdom. Today, more than 40,000 customers rely on its infrastructure, which incorporates multiple back-end and front-end server clusters, for uninterrupted access to critical IT services.

More than 3,000 companies use the company's Microsoft® Solution for Hosted Messaging and Collaboration, based on Microsoft Exchange Server 2003. Partners that resell Cobweb messaging solutions include BT, NTL:Telewest, Eircom Net, and Regus.

Cobweb ensures the highest levels of service delivery through industry best practice and certification. The company achieved ISO 9001:2000 certification for Quality Management in September 2004 and ISO 27001:2005 Information Security Management accreditation in March 2006. It is also a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for Hosting Services.

To remain on the leading edge of hosted IT service delivery, Cobweb works in close partnership with Microsoft. As a member of the Microsoft Joint Development Program, the company receives constant support from Microsoft product teams, helping to ensure that its hosted messaging services continue to lead the industry.

With rapid growth in size and volume of e-mails sent and received, companies of all sizes are facing new data management and storage challenges. In response to this issue, Cobweb decided to deploy new e-mail archiving capabilities on top of its existing

messaging services. “We saw that our customers had growing storage requirements related to the size and volume of their e-mails,” says Michael Frisby, Business Development Director at Cobweb. “As a result, we began evaluating technologies that could help us deliver a range of new, value-added e-mail and e-mail archiving services.”

Cobweb customers are also facing growing pressures to comply with data management and storage requirements outlined in regulatory legislation such as Sarbanes-Oxley in the United States and the Freedom of Information Act in the United Kingdom. “Businesses need to comply with vertical and government legislation related to e-mail management and storage,” says Frisby. “We wanted to deliver new archiving services that help them achieve their compliance goals.”

Through deploying new e-mail archiving technology, Cobweb also hoped to differentiate itself from more traditional Exchange Server 2003 service providers. “By offering new e-mail archiving solutions for long-term, low-cost data storage, compliance with regulatory legislation, and enterprise-class reliability, we hoped to increase our competitive advantage in the market, while cementing our reputation for quality and innovation,” says Frisby.

Solution

In early 2005, Cobweb tested several e-mail management and archiving solutions. “We looked closely at the available e-mail archiving solutions, assessed their capacity to integrate with our existing Exchange Server 2003 multi-tenant hosted messaging environment, and reviewed their functional capabilities,” says Frisby. “After this process, we decided to deploy the ZANTAZ Enterprise Archive Solution.” ZANTAZ provides enterprise-class software and solutions that organizations can use to cost-effectively manage electronic document and messaging

resources, comply with industry regulations, and manage complex litigation and discovery requests.

Based on policies defined by customers, the new managed e-mail archiving service copies selected e-mails from users' Exchange Server 2003 mailboxes and places them in a centralized archive store. A text-only stub of the original e-mail is left in the mailbox and stored in Exchange Server 2003. Stubs, which are typically between two and five kilobytes in size, are used to access the full e-mails and attachments held in the archive store. Searching of e-mails and attachments can be done with sophisticated ZANTAZ EAS Search functionality, and text searches of mailboxes are still possible using the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003 messaging and collaboration client and Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access.

When an e-mail is sent to multiple recipients, a single copy of the document is created in the centralized archive store using a single-instance storage feature. In place of the duplicate e-mails in multiple mailboxes, a stub is inserted, significantly reducing data proliferation and storage on Exchange Server 2003 server computers.

Cobweb customers can choose to archive the journal mailbox, which is a Microsoft Exchange mailbox that captures all of the e-mails sent or received. ZANTAZ EAS has developed functionality to provide hosting providers ultimate flexibility to archive journal mailboxes and to retain e-mails centrally for defined retention periods according to policies set by customers.

The ZANTAZ solution incorporates an Outlook 2003 plug-in, which allows users to retrieve e-mails from the archive store by clicking text-only e-mail stubs in Outlook 2003. The solution also provides an offline archive cache that allows Outlook 2003 users to

access the original e-mails without an Internet connection, for example, using a laptop computer outside the office. Outlook Web Access is updated so that users can view the contents of their e-mail stubs using mobile devices. E-mail stubs opened using Outlook Web Access can also retrieve the original content, such as attachments, from the archive store.

The new e-mail archiving service allows organizations to store a virtually unlimited volume of data. A standard mailbox archive policy determines which messages are archived and how much storage a customer is allocated. When the purchased archive storage quota is reaching its limits, warning e-mails are sent to the nominated customer administrator, so that he or she can purchase additional storage as required. Additional options for the e-mail archiving service include advanced searches of the archive store and customer archive retention policies that allow e-mails to be removed from the archive after specified lengths of time.

The new solution was tested successfully at Cobweb and rolled out to several test customers shortly thereafter. Cobweb officially launched the service in June 2006.

Benefits

Cobweb has demonstrated its commitment to customer service and innovation by delivering an e-mail archiving solution that is fully integrated with the Microsoft Solution for Hosted Messaging and Collaboration and Microsoft Office Outlook 2003. The new service reduces the time required to clean and manage inboxes, helps users work more productively, and reduces storage costs for e-mail data. In addition, it supports compliance with regulatory legislation, enhances data security, and delivers continuous access to critical messaging services.

“Our e-mail archiving solution can help companies overcome enormous current and future data storage challenges and meet the stringent auditing requirements for regulatory compliance.”

Michael Frisby, Business Development
Director, Cobweb Solutions

Increased Storage Efficiency and User Productivity

Large e-mails and attachments now reside in the archive store, and only text-based stubs remain on Exchange Server 2003 servers. As a result, the number of e-mails that users can view from their inboxes has been increased by an average of 50 to 60 percent. “When Outlook 2003 mailboxes are full, users can no longer send or receive e-mails. That’s when busy professionals have to spend time cleaning their mailboxes, causing frustration and reducing productivity,” says Frisby. “Our solution allows far more e-mails to be accessed instantly from Outlook 2003, saving time, supporting more effective working, and significantly enhancing the user experience.”

Additionally, with the Outlook 2003 plug-in, provided with ZANTAZ Enterprise Archive Solution, users can view e-mails saved in the archive store directly from their Outlook 2003 mailboxes. This supports enhanced productivity when compared to other e-mail archiving solutions. Frisby says, “Many solutions on the market use a separate interface for archived mails, requiring users to search for information twice. By contrast, with our solution, users gain access to archived e-mails almost instantly through the familiar Outlook 2003 interface.”

Reduced Storage Costs

Exchange Server 2003 is designed to transport communications data between parties quickly and effectively. However, it is often used to store large volumes of data, which is neither operationally sound nor cost-effective. The ZANTAZ Enterprise Archive Solution allows Cobweb to address this issue, moving all e-mail-related data to a centralized storage environment.

“Previously, we paid £300,000 [U.S.\$567,869] to store five terabytes of data on a state-of-the-art storage area network,” says Frisby. “Using the new e-mail archiving

solution, we can now retain the same volume of data on standard equipment at a tenth of the cost. Because of this saving, we can offer customers greatly reduced storage costs and help them meet rapidly growing data management and storage requirements. We used to sell Exchange Server 2003 storage at £40 [\$75] per gigabyte, per month, but now the cost will be about £6 [\$11] per month.”

Improved Compliance Auditing

Centralized e-mail archiving allows Cobweb customers to search their present and past communications quickly and effectively, enhancing knowledge management and supporting compliance with vertical industry and government legislation. Companies can also opt to retain a copy of each e-mail sent or received across their organizations for specified periods of time. “Mortgage companies are required to keep communications and other documentation for at least 30 years, and life insurance providers for 90 years,” says Frisby. “Our e-mail archiving solution can help companies overcome enormous current and future data storage challenges and meet the stringent auditing requirements for regulatory compliance.”

Enhanced Data Security with Centralized Policies

The delivery of the new Cobweb e-mail archiving service is controlled by ISO 27001:2005 Information Security Management policies and procedures. State-of-the-art Cobweb data centers are managed around the clock by a dedicated security team and network security is controlled by multiple firewalls. At the same time, the facilities and configurations available with the Active Directory® service—available with the Microsoft Windows Server® 2003 operating system—ensure that customer mailboxes are protected effectively in the shared hosting environment. “Cobweb is audited for compliance with ISO 27001 standards on a

For More Information

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For more information about ZANTAZ products and services, call 44 (0) 20 7397 8760 (United Kingdom) or (800) 636-0095 (United States and Canada), or visit the Web site at: www.zantaz.com

For more information about Cobweb products and services, call 44 (0) 8700 731 731 (United Kingdom) or visit the Web site at: www.cobweb.com

six-month basis," says Frisby. "Because access to data stored in Exchange Server 2003 and the archive store is synchronized with centralized user permissions in Active Directory, we can make sure that customer data is protected at all times."

Guaranteed 99.5 Percent Service Availability

The new e-mail archiving solution, which is based on load-balanced Windows Server 2003 and Exchange Server 2003 clusters, offers enterprise-class reliability. Frisby says: "Our state-of-the-art infrastructure allows us to deliver excellent availability. In fact, our service level agreement guarantees service availability of 99.5 percent, both for viewing e-mail stubs in Outlook 2003 mailboxes, and for retrieving e-mails from the centralized archive store."

Enhanced Reputation for Innovation

"This service is an industry first," says Frisby. "It helps our customers overcome the data management and storage requirements of modern electronic communications so that they never have to worry about the availability, security, or integrity of their e-mail data again."

Microsoft Server Product Portfolio

For more information about the Microsoft server product portfolio, go to: www.microsoft.com/servers/default.aspx

Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft Windows Server 2003
 - Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Office
 - Microsoft Office Outlook 2003

Technologies

- Active Directory
- Microsoft Office Outlook Web Access
- Microsoft Provisioning System

Partners

- ZANTAZ

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Document published September 2006

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