



Monitoring Tools Help Transportation Firm Keep Track of New Communications Technology

Overview

United States
Transportation and logistics

Con-way is a major provider of trucking, warehousing and supply-chain management, and other transportation and logistics services. Based in San Mateo, California, the company employs about 27,000 people.

The company needed tools to help monitor and manage activity in its messaging infrastructure, including Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007.

The company deployed MessageStats and Spotlight on Messaging, two solutions from Quest—a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner—that help manage and monitor critical messaging products.

- Provides efficient reporting tools
- Helps resolve performance issues
- Highlights usage patterns for new technologies

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Scott Bueffel, Lead Systems Administrator, Con-way

The messaging infrastructure used at Con-way is critical for the California-based company’s widely dispersed operations, which provide trucking, warehousing, logistics, and related services to customers worldwide. To keep operations flowing smoothly, employees rely heavily on e-mail and instant messaging. To ensure that critical infrastructure components such as Microsoft® Office Communications Server 2007 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 are performing properly and to plan for future growth, Con-way deployed MessageStats and Spotlight on Messaging, two solutions from Quest Software, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. The result is reports that can be easily and quickly produced so the company can monitor and plan for IT activities such as spikes in e-mail traffic, growing use of instant messaging, and transfers of large files that may affect bandwidth performance.

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Situation

Con-way is a large transportation and logistics company that provides services including regional less-than-truckload delivery, intermodal freight transportation, warehousing and supply chain management services, and truck-trailer manufacturing. The company and its subsidiaries—which include Con-way Freight, Con-way Truckload, and Menlo Worldwide Logistics—operate from more than 500 locations in 17 countries on five continents. Con-way, a publicly traded company with headquarters in San Mateo, California, reported revenues of U.S.\$4.38 billion at the end of 2007 and has more than 27,000 employees.

Managing this complex global business requires an extensive IT infrastructure. Con-way IT systems include a messaging environment based on Microsoft® Exchange Server, which Con-way has used for more than 10 years. In 2008, the company began its upgrade to Exchange Server 2007, which it uses to manage about 10,000 mailboxes and more than 90,000 public folders.

To enhance messaging capabilities, Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 was deployed to provide employees with a larger selection of technologies for communicating and collaborating. These include advanced Web conferencing capabilities, enterprise-grade instant messaging, and Microsoft Office Communicator 2007—a unified communications client that Con-way employees use for collaborating across locations and time zones via a range of communications options.

The company also deployed Microsoft Office Communicator Mobile, which extends Office Communicator 2007 capabilities to Windows Mobile® devices; Enterprise Messenger, the client used by BlackBerry handhelds for connecting to a Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 environment;

and Microsoft Office Communicator Web Access 2007, which allows users to connect from inside and outside the corporate network with just a Web browser.

Con-way began its deployment of Office Communications Server 2007 in mid-2008, rolling it out to different groups of users. By late 2008, about 2,200 employees were using Office Communications Server 2007, with the installed user base increasing daily.

Office Communications Server 2007 and Exchange Server 2007 are critical for Con-way operations, and the IT department needs tools to help manage the software in a large, distributed enterprise environment. For example, it is beneficial for Con-way IT administrators to understand how many mobile devices are in use so the company can plan for projected mobile growth and the accompanying technology needed to handle it. Additionally, administrators need to evaluate the number and size of files transferred via Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 and Office Communications Server 2007 to understand the impact that the movement of files might have on the company’s bandwidth.

Similarly, the company wanted a way to easily produce reports on the use of Exchange Server 2007. The reports, which were difficult and time-consuming to produce manually, were needed to ensure that all mailboxes are properly administered and to plan for additional or modified server hardware to handle messaging loads.

“After someone leaves the company, we disable the mailbox and retain it for a period of time. With more than 10,000 mailboxes across almost 20 servers, tracking them can be a challenge,” says Scott Bueffel, Lead Systems Administrator for Con-way. “In the past, it was difficult to stay on top of mailbox management for former employees.”

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What Con-way needed was an efficient tool that could help monitor and report on the use of Office Communications Server 2007 and Exchange Server 2007.

Solution

Con-way deployed MessageStats and Spotlight on Messaging (previously Spotlight on Exchange), two solutions from Quest Software, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner specializing in enterprise systems management that helps organizations with applications, databases, Windows infrastructure, and virtual environments. Quest provides migration, management, policy enforcement and compliance tools for Office Communications Server 2007 and Exchange Server 2007.

MessageStats is a Web-based tool built on Microsoft SQL Server® data management software, Internet Information Services, and the Microsoft .NET Framework. With MessageStats, Con-Way can more easily gather, analyze, and report on the use of Office Communications Server 2007 and Exchange Server 2007 in the organization. It helps the Con-way IT department align the use of e-mail, instant messaging, and other communications tools with service levels, migrations, capacity planning, policies compliance, and strategic goals of the company.

Spotlight on Messaging helps in the early detection of problems that can affect the performance of e-mail and real-time communications.

Benefits

By deploying MessageStats, Con-way IT administrators are able to more effectively monitor usage of the company's communications technologies. They can be more efficient with their time by quickly producing reports that help the company plan for growth. They can also resolve issues in

the communications infrastructure before the problems become a performance drain for users.

IT staff members also use MessageStats to monitor growing technologies, such as mobile devices and instant messaging, in order to plan for future hardware and related infrastructure needs.

Provides Efficient Reporting Tools

The capabilities of MessageStats make it easy to produce reports that reveal patterns in the use of the company's communications infrastructure. "With the administrative reports that we generate from MessageStats," Bueffel says, "we can be more efficient with our time by producing desired results in far less time than it took to compile the data manually. The reports are doing things for us that we had to do manually before, such as drilling down to details like usage and growth of a specific public folder over time."

He says that MessageStats has been invaluable in producing reports for management and budget planning. The Con-Way IT department keeps MessageStats report data for 13 months, providing the administrators with the ability to produce trend and analysis reports that span a full year. This makes it easier to compare traffic and mailbox activity, monitor the usage of activities such as Web conferencing and instant messaging, and look for inconsistencies in server performance.

"Over the long term, we can use this information to provide management with better and more detailed data to support IT growth plans," says Bueffel.

Helps Resolve Performance Issues

The simplified administration provided by MessageStats also helps with daily administrative tasks, such as finding and

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closing inactive mailboxes and identifying issues that might affect performance. "With the deployment of Office Communications Server 2007, we've been watching a number of different areas of performance," says Bueffel. "MessageStats helps us evaluate different types of Office Communications Server 2007 usage to ensure that we have adequate hardware and bandwidth resources. It also helps us to monitor usage and move resources accordingly. For example, if no one is communicating through multi-user audio, but a lot of people are using peer-to-peer audio, we can put our IT resources where it makes the most sense to give users the best performance."

Bueffel also notes that prior to using Spotlight on Messaging, the IT department had little visibility into problems that were affecting users. "We don't want to find out that something is down by waiting for users to call us," he says. "With Spotlight on Messaging, we're able to monitor individual queue length, diagnostic testing, mailbox logon, store responsiveness, and other things specific to Exchange Server 2007. We can react to performance issues before they have an impact on business."

Highlights Usage Patterns for New Technologies

MessageStats helps the company's IT administrators understand how—or if—specific technologies are being used. "We're deploying Office Communications Server 2007 to users in several phases," Bueffel says. "MessageStats helps us understand who is actually using the technology once it's been deployed, and how they are using it. This in turn helps us plan more effectively for deploying to the remaining users." He says that the IT department gets requests from management for usage statistics, for example, on mobile devices. MessageStats is particularly useful for this activity. "How many Windows Mobile devices do we have in any

given department, sorted by the date that the devices were added?" Bueffel says. "Without MessageStats, the report could still be done, but it would take a lot longer."

He adds that the reporting capabilities are also important to enterprise security of the corporate enterprise. "The reporting features of MessageStats and how they can be used for Office Communications Server 2007 and our growing base of mobile devices is important from a security policy standpoint," he says. "For example, if the company decides that it wants to change existing IT-security policies on mobile devices or on instant messaging, it's extremely helpful that we can produce usage data that can help validate that request. Being able to provide concrete information quickly and easily helps us manage critical elements of our IT environment."

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