



Microsoft Online Services Customer Solution Case Study



Online Services Help Software Firm Affordably Access Enterprise-class E-mail

Overview

Country or Region: United States

Industry: IT Services

Customer Profile

Based in Seattle, Washington, Datatune is a small software development firm that helps service-based businesses manage information through an intuitive Web-based application, Datatune Extranet.

Business Situation

To cut costs, Datatune moved from an onsite Exchange Server environment to Google Apps. What the firm saved in costs, it lost in efficiency due to the unfamiliar interface and slower performance.

Solution

Microsoft Online Services provides cost-effective access to enterprise-class Exchange Server capabilities without requiring that Datatune maintain or manage an onsite infrastructure.

Benefits

- Increases productivity
- Costs a fraction of an on-premises solution
- Offers more services than Google Apps
- Provides the requisite security, redundancy and disaster tolerance
- Frees Datatune to focus on its core competencies

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JW Keller, President, Datatune

Based in Seattle, Washington, Datatune is a small business software development firm that serves information-driven companies. After 10 years of running Microsoft® Exchange Server onsite, Datatune moved to Google Apps to cut costs. Productivity diminished as users struggled with navigating the unfamiliar interface and had difficulty managing their schedules without the calendaring features of Microsoft Outlook to which they were accustomed. A year later when LINK Conference Service, a communications solutions provider, presented the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services, Datatune did not hesitate to sign up. With Microsoft Exchange Online and the familiar Outlook client software, Datatune gains an enterprise-class communications solution for a low monthly fee and without the expense or effort of maintaining an on-premises e-mail infrastructure.



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Situation

Datatune is a small software development company based in Seattle, Washington. The firm’s hallmark application, Datatune Extranet, is an intuitive Web-based application that improves the way service-based businesses manage information by tying together different areas of the company such as customer care, vendor management, equipment management, billing, quote generation, work order management and more.

Founded in 1996 as a technical consulting organization, Datatune wrote software to satisfy its own needs as the business grew. “Ultimately, that software turned out to be a much bigger opportunity than consulting,” explains JW Keller, President of Datatune. “So in 2007, we stopped offering consulting services and turned our sole focus to selling and hosting our software.”

Datatune had always relied on Microsoft Exchange Server for its e-mail. After running its own Exchange Server environment for more than 10 years, Datatune moved to Google Apps as a cost-cutting measure. The results were less than satisfactory.

Keller explains, “If you use the Web interface only, it takes a long time to get used to Google’s threaded presentation of messages. And if you’ve come from a traditional mail client experience into Google Apps, there’s a tremendous difference, and a lot of people—myself included—just can’t get used to that.”

After nearly a year of struggling with Google Apps, Keller received a call from LINK Conference Service, a communications service provider. LINK Conference Service told Keller about the Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services. Keller said, “Your timing’s good. We’ve been trying to shove the Google Apps square peg into a round hole for a year now, but I’m not willing to go back to and set up a whole new

domain in Exchange Server and have the expense associated with that.”

The timing was indeed good, and Datatune found the solution it wanted.

Solution

The Business Productivity Online Suite from Microsoft Online Services is a subscription-based offering that includes Microsoft Exchange Online, Office Live Meeting, Microsoft Office Communications Online, and Microsoft SharePoint® Online. Microsoft hosts and manages the servers that support these offerings, while a Microsoft partner such as LINK Conference Service provides local support and value-added services.

Because Microsoft maintains the servers, subscribing organizations such as Datatune do not have to invest in the onsite infrastructure or support resources required to run such a solution. Instead, they pay Microsoft a low monthly fee based on the number of users accessing the services.

Through Microsoft Online Services, Datatune has access to the enterprise-class communication services it needs—including desktop and mobile e-mail, calendaring and contacts, instant messaging, presence, shared workspaces and Web-conferencing applications—all supported by financially-backed service level agreements that promise high availability and high reliability. Datatune is currently using Exchange Online and Live Meeting and may use SharePoint Online in the future.

Keller and his team were delighted to have their familiar e-mail tool back. “When we moved our domain onto the Microsoft Online Services site and logged on to get to the Web interface, it looked exactly like it did when we ran our own Exchange Server—there’s a tremendous amount of comfort in that familiarity.”

“With Microsoft Online Services, we’re getting everything we had with Google Apps, but we don’t have to spend all that time managing and gluing the pieces together.”

JW Keller, President, Datatune

Benefits

The Business Online Productivity Suite brings compelling benefits to Datatune, such as increased productivity, reduced costs, greater security, the freedom to focus on core competencies, and more.

Increases Productivity Due to Much Faster Performance

“Just having that Google thread issue gone will lower my stress levels by several points and allow me to manage e-mail from an autopilot basis,” says Keller. “Having Exchange Online gives me better portability of data—it’s much easier to access from my phone. That was a huge issue for us, and now it’s solved.”

Keller also says that while Google Apps calendaring functionality is good—once a user leaves that interface, they don’t have many options for integration and synchronization. “With Google Apps, the e-mail is way slower than Exchange. In the office or remotely, Outlook is much faster than Google Apps.”

For Keller and his team, it all comes down to performance. “If you’re a power user and you like to fly around your files and folders and have a message store of a gigabyte or more, the performance difference between Exchange Online and Google Apps is significant—and it’s a deal breaker in some cases.”

Keller appreciates the new solution’s seamless integration. “Microsoft Exchange Online is a much cleaner solution than Google Apps because everything is from one provider—Microsoft—so I don’t need a lot of third-party applications to link computers, cell phones, and laptops.”

Putting calendars on the phone is a good example. “With Google, we need several applications running on our desktop or in the cloud to make it work. Now we can get rid of

a lot of superfluous stuff. With Microsoft Online Services, we’re getting everything we had with Google Apps, but we don’t have to spend all that time managing and gluing the pieces together.”

While Keller feels that “peace of mind” is a hackneyed expression, he also feels that it is spot on in this case. “With Google Apps, I probably spent three or four hours a month chasing down why one feature or another didn’t work. And then there’s always the anxiety that comes along with that complexity. What if it breaks when I need it? I haven’t received e mail all day—is something down? There’s an emotional component that I can’t put a price or a time value on, but it’s something that I’m very pleased to relinquish.”

Costs a Fraction of an On-Premises Solution, Offers More Services than Google Apps

Keller knows from experience the expense involved in maintaining an on-premises Exchange Server environment. “It’s a tough ROI for a small company. Considering servers, software, configuration, labor and preparation for disaster and recovery, backup software, we’ve never deployed Exchange Server for less than \$5K. And your ongoing maintenance in that environment is anywhere from 15 minutes to several hours a month just to keep things running.”

Google Apps represented a much more affordable solution for Datatune than maintaining its own messaging infrastructure. Now the cost advantage is even better. “Microsoft Online Services costs about the same as Google, but you get so much more” says Keller.

For example, Datatune had to pay an additional fee to another service provider to get conferencing capabilities. With Microsoft Online Services, the firm can use Live Meeting for no extra charge. “I’m looking

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forward to cancelling my \$50 to \$60 monthly GoToMeeting bill,” quips Keller. In effect, Datatune had been paying \$70 to \$80 per user per month for services it now receives for less than \$20 per user per month.

Provides the Requisite Security, Redundancy and Disaster Tolerance

The fact that Microsoft delivers Microsoft Online Services with secure, state-of-the-art data centers—with redundancy and disaster tolerance built in—was mandatory for Datatune. “If it were any other company, I’d be asking a lot of questions about what they’ve done for disaster recovery planning. I’d want to look behind the curtain. Given Microsoft’s experience with hosted applications, I take a tremendous amount of comfort that it is done right. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have signed up for the service.”

Frees Datatune to Focus on its Core Competencies

When Datatune maintained its own Exchange Server, it spent 10 to 15 hours a month managing patches and updates. “We would much rather pay for somebody else to do that,” states Keller. “The big relief is not having the stress, because if you’re in the business of providing hosted applications and you can’t even keep your own e-mail running, that has a tremendous impact on your perceived credibility.

“Having 24 by 7 access to e-mail and communication services is absolutely of paramount consideration in our business because it is the wheel of commerce for us,” says Keller. “Having the ability to outsource that frees us up to work on our core competencies. As a small business, any hour we spend managing setup configurations, troubleshooting, or doing disaster recovery is time pulled away from revenue-generating work.”

Positions the Firm for the Future

Keller feels that hosted applications are the way of the future for achieving business success. “We are strong proponents of hosted applications, and we would host everything if there were a trusted source we could use,” says Keller. He likes the fact that with Microsoft Online Services, all his users need is an Internet connection and a browser and they have full access to all the services they’ve grown accustomed to—whether they’re in their office, at home, in a hotel on the other side of the continent, or on a cruise ship in the Caribbean. “It’s the same process,” he says, “the same look, the same feel.”

“I’m really excited about Microsoft Online Services because our customers really need something like this,” says Keller. “Although we’re not going to resell it, we can say to them ‘This is what we do, and it works great for us. Give it a shot.’ Microsoft Online Services has been a big win for us and it’s going to have a major effect on the industry as a whole.”

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 who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. 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 LINK Conference Service products and services, call (800) 756-8280 or visit the Web site at: www.linkconferencecall.com

For more information about Datatune Incorporated products and services, call (206) 579-1010 or visit the Web site at: www.datatune.com

Microsoft Online Services

Microsoft Online Services is a business-class communications and collaboration software offering delivered as a subscription service, hosted by Microsoft, and sold with partners. These services help make it easier for customers to rapidly and cost-effectively access the most up-to-date technologies, and are designed for rapid deployment to provide customers with streamlined communications, simplified management, and business-class reliability and security.

For IT staff, Microsoft Online Services helps reduce the burden of performing routine IT management tasks such as installation, provisioning, ongoing maintenance, patches, updates, and upgrades, making it possible for them to spend more time on initiatives that move the business forward. These services are backed by strong SLAs and are designed to meet the regulatory compliance and reliability needs of enterprise customers. On a technical level, the services boast the sophistication and reliability that customers expect from Microsoft, which continues to invest heavily in building data centers to support these services.

For more information, visit: www.microsoft.com/online

Software and Services

- Services
 - Microsoft Exchange Online
 - Microsoft SharePoint Online
 - Office Live Meeting