



Ad Agency Reduces Costs and Improves Productivity with New Communications System

Overview

Country: United States

Industry: Advertising

Customer Profile

DDB Seattle, in Seattle, Washington, is a full-service communications company. The 175-employee agency is a unit of DDB Worldwide and Omnicom Group, the third largest advertising agency in the world.

Business Situation

DDB's previous voice-mail system went down about six times a year, for a total of up to 20 hours of downtime. The agency needed a system that was more reliable, flexible, and easy to manage and maintain.

Solution

DDB Seattle deployed Active Voice's Repartee UC for Windows 2000 system to integrate its voice mail with e-mail in one easy-to-access interface.

Benefits

- Reduced downtime
- Increased productivity
- Reduced third-party support costs
- Reduced IT management and training time

“Repartee UC and Windows Server have made it a lot easier to train Office Services staffers—who do not necessarily have a high level of technical skills—to do the routine maintenance tasks and run backups.”

Mark Clarke, Vice President of Information Services, DDB Seattle

After experiencing increasing downtime with a voice-mail system that was running on a legacy operating system, advertising agency DDB Seattle decided to upgrade to Active Voice's Repartee UC (Unified Communications) for Windows® 2000 unified messaging platform. The increased stability, remote management capabilities, and telephony support provided by Microsoft® Windows 2000 Server integrated seamlessly with the Repartee UC system, enabling the agency to reduce unscheduled downtime from about 20 hours per year to virtually zero, and to reduce the associated third-party support costs by U.S.\$3,000 annually. In addition, the familiar Windows management interface enables the agency's Office Services staff to perform maintenance tasks in minutes per day rather than hours, thus freeing the agency's IT staff to work on more strategic projects.



Situation

DDB Seattle, a regional office of the third largest advertising agency in the world, is a full-service communications company. Delivering its particular blend of personalized client service and thought-provoking creative work requires well-orchestrated collaborative efforts built on effective communication. Efficient communications are even more critical to support the agency's flexible work options, which allow some staff to work from home as much as a day or more a week.

In the early 1990s, DDB deployed a voice-mail system that, over time, became increasingly difficult for the agency's Office Services staff to maintain. Routine tasks such as adding and deleting mailboxes required a significant amount of support from the IT staff. In addition, the operating system would go down about a half-dozen times a year.

Sometimes the problem could be resolved quickly, but often it took a half day or more and the expense of third-party consultants to get the system back up and running. In the meantime, the agency's 175 employees were without voice-mail access, which hindered their productivity and their ability to respond to clients.

"Basically we'd be losing about 20 hours a year when people couldn't get their voice messages and couldn't leave voice mail," explains DDB Vice President of Information Technology Mark Clarke. "Multiply that 20 hours by about 175 people, and that's an expensive problem, not to mention an inconvenience for clients."

Solution

When DDB moved to new Seattle offices in March 2003, the IT group capitalized on the opportunity to upgrade the agency's voice-mail system. The agency wanted to run its voice-mail system on the Microsoft® Windows® 2000 Server operating system,

which is part of the Microsoft Windows Server System™ integrated server infrastructure software. Because Windows Server™ was the networking platform for the rest of its business systems, DDB chose the Repartee UC for Windows 2000 system from Active Voice—a global provider of unified messaging, computer telephony, and voice-messaging solutions that has installed more than 150,000 systems worldwide.

The Repartee UC system offers advanced unified messaging, voice mail, and automated attendant functionality. It integrates with Microsoft Exchange Server—also part of Windows Server System—and the Microsoft Outlook® messaging and collaboration client to provide a complete, unified communications platform. By moving its voice-mail system to Windows 2000 Server, the agency also expected to gain increased reliability, remote management capabilities, and consistency between the voice-mail system and the rest of its corporate network infrastructure.

DDB deployed Windows 2000 Server and the latest version of Repartee UC on a Dell PowerEdge 2500 System in about two hours. The Telephone Application Programming Interface (TAPI) in Windows Server facilitates interoperability between personal computers and telephone equipment so that an application can give Windows-based clients access to voice services.

TAPI supports Active Voice's optional unified messaging modules, such as ViewMail for Microsoft Messaging, which integrates with Microsoft Exchange Server to provide a graphical interface through which PC users can listen to, fast-forward through, and rewind their voice messages. DDB is testing ViewMail with about a half-dozen users to explore its capability for forwarding a voice message simultaneously to multiple people within the agency.

“Using ViewMail means that I don’t have to use my phone for voice mail, and it makes it easier to listen to complicated messages because I can just drag the slider back to listen to them again.”

Mark Clarke, Vice President of Information Services, DDB Seattle

In addition, the remote management capabilities in Windows Server enable DDB’s IT staff to troubleshoot and update the operating system remotely. These capabilities also enable the agency’s Office Services staffers to make an administrative connection to the server to add and delete users, change storage limits, and check mailboxes, without leaving their own offices.

DDB migrated its corporate network to the Microsoft Windows Server 2003 operating system in February 2004, and will continue to run the Windows 2000–based voice-mail server with the new network infrastructure.

Benefits

By deploying Repartee UC for Windows 2000, DDB Seattle has saved 20 hours of downtime a year, reduced third-party support costs, and reduced IT management and training time. It has also gained support for optional features to further enhance worker productivity through more efficient communications.

Reduced Downtime; Increased Worker Productivity

As of March 2004, almost a year after deploying Repartee UC for Windows 2000, DDB had experienced no unscheduled downtime in its unified messaging system. “We’ve brought the system down ourselves a couple times for maintenance or upgrades, but, other than that, we really haven’t had a problem,” Clarke notes. By reducing downtime from 20 hours a year to virtually zero, DDB has been able to maintain more consistent productivity for its 175 workers.

In addition, ViewMail makes it easier for workers to access and manage their messages more efficiently. “Using ViewMail means that I don’t have to use my phone for voice mail, and it makes it easier to listen to complicated messages because I can just drag the slider back to listen to them again,” Clarke says.

Reduced Third-Party Support Costs

The reliability of Windows Server has eliminated many of the third-party support calls necessitated by the old system. “We don’t have to call our phone vendor every time we want to do something,” Clarke says. “That saves at least a couple hundred dollars per call.”

Reduced IT Management and Training Time

DDB’s IT staff is already trained on managing Windows Server for the corporate network, so they can easily focus those skills on the voice-mail server without additional training. The remote management support in Windows Server made it easy to install Repartee UC for Windows 2000 and apply updates.

The Windows-based management interface also makes it easier for Office Services workers to add and delete users. To add a user, they just open a form for a default mailbox, duplicate it, and change the person’s name, and they’re finished.

“Repartee UC and Windows Server have made it a lot easier to train Office Services staffers—who do not necessarily have a high level of technical skills—to do the routine maintenance tasks and run backups using the built-in Windows backup system,” Clarke says. “The support in Windows Server for remote management really saves a lot of time.”

For More Information

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Microsoft Windows Server System

Microsoft Windows Server System integrated server infrastructure software is designed to support end-to-end solutions built on Windows Server 2003. It creates an infrastructure based on integrated innovation, Microsoft's holistic approach to building products and solutions that are intrinsically designed to work together and interact seamlessly with other data and applications across your IT environment. This allows you to reduce the costs of ongoing operations, deliver a more secure and reliable IT infrastructure, and drive valuable new capabilities for the future growth of your business.

For more information about Windows Server System, go to: <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserversystem>

Software and Services

- Microsoft Windows Server System
 - Microsoft Windows 2000 Server
 - Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server
- Microsoft Office Outlook 2003
- Microsoft Outlook 2002

Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge 2500 System

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