



Case Study: Prent Corporation

Creating a Global Communication Platform for a Major Manufacturing Firm

- Improved real-time communication capabilities with IM, presence, Web and video conferencing
- Enhanced global employee communication and client collaboration
- Cost effectively combined existing Nortel PBX with OCS and Exchange 2007

"Our new global communication platform enables our engineers in Wisconsin to call an impromptu meeting with colleagues at our manufacturing facility in Malaysia to discuss project status with clients anywhere in the world. The way we're able to communicate is improving our ability to rapidly deliver high-quality products to our customers."

– Steve Zimmerman, CIO, Prent Corporation

Client Profile

Prent Corporation is the world's leading designer and producer of custom thermoform packaging for the medical and electronics industries. Headquartered in Janesville, Wisconsin, the company has over 1,000 employees worldwide at operations in Wisconsin, Arizona, Puerto Rico, Singapore, Malaysia, and China.

Prent is ISO 9001:2000 certified and manufactures in "class 100,000" clean rooms. Committed to quality, Prent continuously is improving its processes with Six Sigma and other programs. An innovator in its industry, the company is the recipient of many accolades including 12 prestigious World Star Packaging Awards.

Business and Technology Challenge

The nature of Prent's business calls for extreme quality assurance and a high level of communication and collaboration among Prent team members and clients. To remain at the forefront of their industry, Prent was interested in using the most up-to-date technologies to improve connectivity, expand real-time communication channels and augment the ability for geographically dispersed people to work together. Prent envisioned a Unified Communication solution, combining traditional telephony and computing, built upon a global platform that would instantly connect employees and customers across continents—and enable both rapid and rich communication.

Another key project driver was the need to improve the company's voicemail system and replace it with a more convenient and feature-rich voice messaging technology. The timing was perfect for an upgrade as the legacy voicemail system's warranty was near its expiration.

As the company considered different options from various vendors, most offered either limited functionality or were associated with much higher implementation and maintenance costs. It appeared that the best solution would be one that leveraged the company's existing phone system, while offering enhanced communication options. Microsoft's Unified Communication platform, consisting of Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 offered Prent the best solution that would incorporate their existing phone technology.

PointBridge was selected as the partner to assist with this important project, based on PointBridge's communication and collaboration solution expertise and credentials as a member of the Microsoft Unified Communications Voice Partner Program.

The Solution: A Global Communication Platform Combining Telephones and Technology

PointBridge and Prent worked together to plan, design and build a world-class communication and collaboration platform that would combine the company's existing Nortel telephone system with market-leading communication and collaboration technologies from Microsoft.

The new solution would transform how Prent conducts business. The following scenario went from pipe-dream to reality:

An employee in the Janesville, Wisconsin office wraps up a Voice over IP conversation with a colleague from Puerto Rico. When the call finishes, her presence status changes from "In a Call" to "Available". This change of presence prompts a co-worker in Shanghai, China to send an IM to her with an urgent question. A single click of the mouse during the IM session initiates a video conference and allows them to jointly review a critical spreadsheet. They ultimately decide the best course of action is to schedule a follow-up LiveMeeting via Outlook with team members in Johor, Malaysia.

The integration of Microsoft Office Communications Server 2007 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 with the existing Nortel phone system solved the company's need for a better voicemail solution, and offered enhanced real-time communication capabilities including:

- Instant messaging
- Real-time presence
- Web conferencing (via LiveMeeting)
- Video conferencing
- Voice over IP
- Unified Messaging (voicemail in the Outlook inbox)

The selection of these Microsoft technologies was highly strategic. Prent employees around the world use the Microsoft Office System on their computer workstations, laptops and mobile devices. Consequently, the learning curve for employees was practically flat. For example, Prent employees can simply click on the LiveMeeting icon from within Microsoft Outlook to schedule a Web conference.

This project also captured a "multiplier effect" benefit for Prent. Because all components in the Microsoft integrated communication and collaboration stack are pre-integrated and designed to work together, Prent realized a significant savings on integration, deployment, and training costs.

Bringing All the Pieces Together

The project plan called for the deployment of OCS and Exchange Unified Messaging, and the integration of these Microsoft technologies with the Nortel Meridian Option 11C phone system located in Prent's Janesville office.

PointBridge integrated OCS with the existing Nortel phone system using a Dialogic voice gateway. This allowed users to place and receive calls from OCS to other OCS clients, Nortel phones, and the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). PointBridge then replaced the existing Nortel voicemail system with Exchange 2007 Unified Messaging, using the same Dialogic voice gateway to integrate the two systems.

PointBridge and Prent launched a pilot group of 25 users to use OCS, LiveMeeting, and Unified Messaging. Based on functionality testing and user feedback, PointBridge adjusted the configurations to meet Prent's needs. Once the fine-tuning was completed, the solution was ready for roll-out. PointBridge provided Prent with the necessary documentation to deploy and configure the remainder of the users in the environment.

The entire project took approximately six weeks to complete from start to finish.

"The most rewarding part of this project was seeing the technology in action. It's great to see how rapidly Prent employees have incorporated the new communication tools into the way they work with customers."

— Dave Greve, Engagement Manager, PointBridge

Results

Much more than an upgraded voicemail system, the new communication platform is transforming the way Prent employees communicate, collaborate and serve their customers—and is a resounding success.

Now, Prent employees across the entire enterprise have access to voicemail via email or phone, and can communicate globally with colleagues with ease. The solution is energizing employees and productivity has increased with the enhanced communication capabilities.

All this, and the solution is highly cost effective. By working with PointBridge, Prent was able to decrease its annual voicemail support spending. This was accomplished by replacing its conventional voicemail system with Exchange Unified Messaging, and creating an environment that Prent's internal IT staff is able to maintain.

And that's just the start. Built with a view to the future, Prent's global communication platform is ready for additional communication and collaboration possibilities. Next steps include OCS voice for remote users, as well as federation, Public Internet Connectivity (PIC) and the ability to invite external users to Web conferences. Prent is now positioned to meet the innovation challenges of the thermoforming industry with world-class communication.

About PointBridge

PointBridge (www.pointbridge.com), headquartered in Chicago, is a consulting company that connects people to people and people to information. The company builds award-winning collaboration and business intelligence solutions with Microsoft technologies including, SharePoint, Exchange, Office Communications Server and SQL Server. PointBridge is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and was recently named the 2008 Global Partner of the Year Finalist for Citizenship and the 2007 U.S. Central Region Partner of the Year. PointBridge was also honored in 2005 as the worldwide Microsoft Partner of the Year for Advanced Infrastructure Solutions and won the Microsoft Exchange Solution of the Year award.



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