



## 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY MICROSOFT TECHNOLOGY MEETS LONG-ESTABLISHED EDUCATIONAL TRADITION

For more than one hundred years, learning and research at the University of Birmingham has played a major part in the success of the city and the region. The University has been leading the way in education since 1900 and is determined to continue to be at the forefront of world research well into the future. In the words of its first Chancellor, the University of Birmingham was founded to 'create a new model for higher education and to produce the minds that would shape the modern industrial world'.

Today his vision has created a university which has an ongoing commitment to invest in projects that enhance the learning experience and quality of life for its students and its employees. With over 8,000 staff working in a range of academic, professional, technical, manual and clerical roles, the University of Birmingham is one of the largest and most diverse of its kind. It is made up of five separate academic Colleges and has three sites, two smaller ones at Sellyoak and in Stratford, and a larger 250-acre site at Edgbaston which forms the University's main campus.

### Meeting a challenge

With such a vast campus and an extensive workforce, effective communication is one of the most vital aspects of the University's administrative responsibility, as Head of Telecoms Rob Derbyshire explains:

*"We have always invested in the latest communications technology over the years and currently operate two networked Aastra MD110s, supporting 300 users at Sellyoak and more than 7,000 at Edgbaston. We also added the 15 users from the Stratford site to the network in 2005 via an IP solution. This already provides all of our staff with a very high level of communications ability, but we wanted to enhance this further, to make the organisation even more efficient."*

In the Spring of 2007 Rob started to look at the benefits which could be gained from integrating the University's existing telecoms system with the latest technology from Microsoft, and as a first step he contacted his longstanding telecoms provider Damovo, who had

## ...DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING THE SYSTEM AS THE ORGANISATION HAS EVOLVED

supplied the original telecoms system. Damovo and the University of Birmingham have been working together for more than seven years now, developing and enhancing the system as the organisation has evolved and expanded.

### Implementing new technologies

The project started in mid 2007 when Damovo integrated the University's phone system with Microsoft Exchange as a pilot exercise for 20 staff members in the IT department. This integration provides sophisticated Unified Messaging and enables voicemail messages to be sent directly to an Outlook Inbox, meaning that these messages are presented to the user when they log on, regardless of where they are. This saves them having to collect messages from the phone in the office or dial in to pick up voicemails remotely. Fax messages are also delivered in the same way, providing staff with one unified location to access all of their messages, whether email, voicemail or fax. Rob explains further:

***"The pilot has been a real success. It has gone very well and our existing users all think it's great. We now plan to roll this out to around 500 more staff within 6-12 months as soon as we have carried out some other supporting IT projects, and then to the rest of the University after that."***

With the Unified Messaging pilot up and running, Rob then started to talk to Damovo about how the University's existing phone system and its Microsoft Office Communications Server (OCS) could be brought

together in order to provide further productivity and efficiency benefits for the organisation. The result of this conversation was that in the Autumn of 2007 a second pilot project was initiated, working with the same 20 staff members. This pilot integrated the Aastra MD110 at Edgbaston with the University's Microsoft OCS solution, to provide a full presence management and collaborative working solution.

### The benefits of integration

By linking these two systems, a whole host of additional user benefits are made possible. One of the key features of Microsoft OCS is that all staff members who are on the system can see their colleagues' status. This allows them to know if the other person is free, busy, away or offline simply by looking at their presence status within the on-screen Buddy List, or even from within a Microsoft Office Suite document. But this information is only based on the users' calendar status or on their PC usage.

***"...a real success - plan to roll out to 500 more staff within 6-12 months and the rest of the University after that"***



## A WIDE RANGE OF BENEFITS IN TERMS OF IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY AND COST SAVINGS

However, when the Microsoft OCS solution is integrated into the phone system, it 'knows' when a colleague is on the phone without them having to change their status manually. This makes communication far more efficient as the user can tell whether a colleague is likely to be able to respond immediately to an email or take a call, and if not they can schedule a call-back for when that person becomes free. The integration with Microsoft OCS also enables incoming calls to be viewed on screen and allows users to 'pick up' the call with a click of the mouse, automatically taking their desk phone off-hook.

More recently, the University of Birmingham has also started working with Damovo to trial Microsoft OCS Enterprise Voice. With this solution, the user has control of where a call goes after it comes into their main DDI number in the office, and can set it to go to a home number, a mobile number or a different office number depending on where they are working and what they are doing. Calls can even be routed to the user's laptop as a free Wi-Fi call, which of course then also saves money - especially on roaming charges if the user is abroad, as the call would otherwise have probably been made direct to their mobile. Rob explains the benefits:

***"The setting in Microsoft OCS will determine where each call goes, making the University's staff members reachable wherever they are. This will make a real difference, especially for those who work remotely or travel a lot. The key thing which makes this functionality different from a standard call divert profile is that it can be changed as often as the user requires, hour by hour or even minute by minute if necessary. It's true 'one number contactability' with complete flexibility and simple management.***

***Microsoft OCS Enterprise Voice not only enables our travelling staff to stay in contact easily and cost-effectively, it also helps our remote workers to feel more like part of the campus. And of course, because of the system's presence management capability, users can see their colleagues' status, even if they are in a hotel room on the other side of the world."***

### The bigger picture

With pilots for Unified Messaging and Microsoft OCS integration firmly established, and the pilot for Enterprise Voice being launched, the University of Birmingham is well placed to undertake a full roll out of these sophisticated technologies to all staff over the coming months and years. This will also include University-wide access to other OCS features such as video calling, web collaboration, Instant Messaging and so on. The entire implementation will provide the University with a wide range of benefits in terms of improved productivity and efficiency whilst also saving costs, as Rob concludes:

***"A project like this cannot be done overnight. We need to think about which users require which services, and then to educate them in how to use those effectively in order to gain the maximum advantages. But we are confident that it will work well and that huge benefits will be derived. As with the Unified Messaging project, we also plan to roll out these other technologies to around 500 users in the next 6-12 months, concentrating on the staff who need them most. For example, providing remote and travelling workers with the Enterprise Voice functionality as a priority.***

***We have been extremely happy with Damovo as our technology partner. They are unique in the marketplace, strong in telephony and with a strong story to tell in the Microsoft space as well. We have a long and positive history with them on the telephony side and they have the right people in the right place to benefit us. As a hybrid in the telephony and IT arena Damovo is well placed to handle this type of project for us. Lots of people talk about the benefits of these types of solution, but the difference is working with a company that has actually done it and can truly evangelise the benefits."***

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