

3M ESPE reaches ROI with the new Unified Messaging solution within a few months



Communications solution at its best

3M ESPE is a German subsidiary of the worldwide operating 3M group and produces and sells more than 2,000 products for the improvement of the oral health to dental laboratories and dentists.

The advertising pitch of the enterprise based in Bavaria is "Everything to increase the productivity of your laboratory and to contribute to the economic success of your business" which is valid not only for its innovative products in the field of the prevention, prosthodontics and tooth preservation, but in a certain manner also for the comprehensive IT solutions which have been built up by the IT department within the last few years. The 15-headed IT team around Günther Kratofil takes care for an enterprise-wide network with meanwhile more than 800 workstations.

Almost 10 years ago the decision was made in Seefeld to implement Lotus Notes. Crucial at that time were the extensive workflow capabilities of Lotus Notes.

In addition the teamwork is organized with Sametime in the intranets and in the internet in real time. Besides instant messaging a notice-board and a distributed, common document handling (screen sharing) are parts of the used applications.

Reliable fax solution

In addition a large number of the 1,000 German employees are using already for many years an innovative Unified Messaging solution to optimize the business processes within the enterprise. After a comprehensive product comparison Notes was enhanced by a solution of the Berlin based Ferrari electronic AG. Via OfficeMaster for Notes the employees can send out business correspondence directly from the mail client via fax.

In addition to the head office in Seefeld, Bavaria, where the Notes server is operating under Windows 2000 two external production sites are connected via Terminal Server. To send out a fax from any Notes database, the employees simply send their document to the internal fax domain as a Notes mail.

OfficeMaster sends all messages including attachments, e.g. Word and Excel documents, to the recipient. The fax number is taken directly from the e-mail address field and the memorandum mask is altered to the cover sheet. The sender receives a receipt about the correct order handling via Notes mail.

Received faxes are delivered directly to the user as a graphical file in a mail attachment without any delay. The first page of the fax is opened and visibly already which increased the acceptance of the solution by the users very much.

The respective fax recipient is identified by his personal extension in the directory. All additional administrative tasks, e.g. the user management, are handled via the Notes client, too. This meets the requirements of the concept "single point of administration".

The hardware fax machines still in use in the enterprise shall be reduced within the next months.

Additional modules of the Unified Messaging solution as the voice mail which delivers missed voice messages as audio file directly to the e-mail client or the direct SMS dispatch from Lotus Notes, e.g. to provide the latest information to sales representatives, are not used at 3M ESPE at the moment.

Cost-effective SAP connection

For three years the enterprise is using a SAP R/3 solution in which almost all lines of business are integrated meanwhile. An external service provider takes care for the SAP solution which is hosted in a large computer center in Munich.

In the context of an upgrade of OfficeMaster for Notes 3M ESPE decided to replace the SAP fax solution leased from the computer center by an in-house solution based on OfficeMaster.

The full integration in SAP R/3 makes it possible to easily send faxes out of the SAPWorkflow by mouse click. To control the sending status which the responsible person can take from the business Workplace is just as simple. Here all received news are stored as well so that a loop is created which is integrated into the workflow smoothly and optimizes the work processes.

The cost saving for 3M ESPE is great. With approx. 1,000 faxes which are generated every month directly from the SAP modules, the internal fax solution by OfficeMaster for SAP is amortized already now. "Where the return on investment in large IT solutions usually takes years" as said by the project manager Günter Kraus "we have reached ROI because of the saved leasing costs within a few months".

The IT manager was surprised positively as well by the short time needed to complete the project. Within a day the upgrade of Lotus Notes and the installation of OfficeMaster for SAP were finished.

Substantial cost reduction potential

Even if not all cost savings due to the introduction of the Unified Messaging solution can be calculated in Euros one can see the advantages very clearly. So sending the faxes time-shifted overnight saves cash money because of the better telephone rates. But also the saved working time which increases the productivity by the more efficient use of the communications services in enterprises can be represented by a model calculation.

According to surveys an average time of approx. five minutes is needed to send a classical fax. This includes printing the fax, going to the fax machine, entering the number, waiting for the sending receipt, and filing the faxed document.

The required time for sending a computer fax is fundamentally lower. The fax is sent out after selecting the number directly out of the mail client, the sending receipt is delivered into the mailbox automatically. Walking and waiting times are dropped.

The automation of the filing process not only saves working time but it is guaranteed at the same time that no documents are lost. Saying that the time needed to send a computer fax lasts approx. 30 seconds the time saving potential is summed up to approx. 4.5 minutes compared with the classical approach. If only one fax would sent out by each of the 800 workstations of 3M ESPE every day in addition to the faxes sent out from SAP, the enterprise would save more than 1,200 hours working time monthly!

The cost-savings for equipment expenditures and supplies (fax machine, printer, toner, paper) are still not taken into account in this calculation. These numbers impressively demonstrate how productivity can be improved by a smart IT solution without long project terms.

