



MESSAGING

Compass says hosted e-mail could save it 60%

- Global food services firm compares cost of in-house and hosted system
- Migration of 1,750 users begun after major savings identified

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Global food services firm Compass Group is moving to a hosted e-mail and messaging service that it estimates could save the company 60% on its messaging spending.

The service, from Cobweb Solutions, will also allow the company to give managers mobile e-mail access using Blackberry devices.

The Compass Group is a widespread organisation with small offices dotted across 54 countries. When it considered upgrading to a single global messaging system it was finding the support costs prohibitive.

"We only have three major offices in the world, so to try to integrate on the same mailing

system has a lot of issues; where to host, for example," said Gerhard Eygelaar, director of IT, EMEA, at Compass.

The cost of employing high-level systems administrators was another factor in the decision to opt for a hosted system, as was the prospect of having to build a data-centre to allow for business expansion, much of which would not be fully used immediately.

To provide a cost comparison to an externally hosted system, Compass calculated the average cost per user of future support for its Microsoft Exchange e-mail system in its South African subsidiary. Including the capital expenditure on a necessary hardware upgrade to allow migration to Exchange Server 2003, the average monthly cost over three years was calculated at £14 for an in-house system, compared to £6 for a hosted service.

Despite the compelling cost ar-

gument for opting for a hosted service, Compass was aware of the risks involved in handing over a vital business tool to a third party, said Eygelaar. It conducted an 18-month pilot involving 64 users in different countries. "If you cannot solve any problems over 18 months, then you probably never will," said Eygelaar.

After reworking the service level agreements and a considerable amount of due diligence, Eygelaar was happy the pilot was a success and the company approved the global roll-out, which began in September. About 1,200 users are now migrated and Compass expects all 1,750 users to be on the system by December.

In addition to e-mail, Cobweb will support mobile e-mail users on Blackberry handheld systems and laptops over a variety of infrastructures, including satellite systems for remote locations throughout Africa.

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