

**INDUSTRY**

British Airways operates one of the world's most extensive international scheduled airline route networks, comprising some 147 destinations in 75 countries, carrying in the year to March 2007 more than 33 million passengers worldwide. Also, one of the world's longest established airlines, it has always been regarded as an industry-leader.

Whether customers are in the air or on the ground, British Airways takes pride in providing a full service experience.

British Airways empowers employees with corporate e-mail via CommuniGate Pro
CommuniGate Pro provides email to over 30,000 mobile employees at British Airways to simplify corporate-wide communications.

CHALLENGE

In choosing a messaging solution appropriate for its worldwide work force, it was important that it be secure, flexible and have the ability to customize the look and feel to keep the British Airways brand. CommuniGate Pro Dynamic cluster architecture fit the profile.

As part of British Airways' Employee Self Service (ESS) program, e-mail accounts have been rolled out to all British Airways employees who did not previously have access to company e-mail. This new service, called ESS Mail, provides everyone with the ability to communicate online with colleagues worldwide and within other segments of business, as well as to receive business information.

Extensive trials were run with representative groups involving: front-line operational teams from the airline's Heathrow Customer Service, Inflight Service, Flight Operations, and Engineering business areas.

These diverse groups all have different work patterns and traditionally were not using a PC as part of their jobs. Much work was done throughout the trials to meet the cultural and technical needs of all user groups. Workshops and user feedback, along with strong involvement of the trade union community, helped provide the basis for a smooth launch of the service. Departmental user champions also helped to gain user buy-in and drive change.

SOLUTION

Following extensive testing, British Airways chose the CommuniGate Pro Dynamic cluster solution for its 99.999% uptime, and its ease of customization and administration for its global messaging solution. After a successful rollout across British Airways' global front-line workforce, everyone at the airline is connected via e-mail. Corporate and departmental news and information is now sent more quickly than ever to a wider range of employees. This has resulted in consistent messages going to everyone at the same time.

This development is a great step in simplifying communication and administration channels, and assists everyone working as a "unified team" with-in British Airways. Other objectives of the ESS program include turning off alternative or duplicated channels and eliminating waste. CommuniGate Pro is helping the program to achieve these goals. "We now provide e-mail to all front-line staff, wherever they are, at work or away from their home base, round-the-clock, seven days a week. ESS Mail links up our mobile communities easily with our existing corporate users, all using the same addresses --@ba.com," said Allen Huish, manager employee self service, at British Airways.

Ian P. Johnston, IT delivery head for this project at British Airways adds, "Through its advanced clustering technology, we get a high level of application resilience. This, combined with the option to easily add nodes when required, gives us a flexible, scalable e-mail solution. We also liked the customizable skin, which CommuniGate was happy to develop for us to ensure our brand offering remains consistent throughout our ESS toolset."

SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

BA runs CommuniGate Pro Dynamic Cluster across two frontend and two backend servers. All servers are 2 CPU Intel Xeon, with 4GB in the backend and 2GB memory in the frontend servers. The data is accessed via shared NFS AIX servers and stored on an IBM ESS SAN fabric.

BENEFITS

ESS Mail is proving to be very popular thanks to the ease with which people can contact their colleagues, and receive important operational information at the appropriate time. A good example of this was the disruption at London's Heathrow Airport in the summer of 2006 caused by the introduction of new security measures. With services in to and out of the airport being delayed, there was an urgent need to keep all operational staff up to date on the situation.

ESS Mail provided the perfect channel for getting the latest news and information out to staff, who would have been hard to reach in the past with regular and consistent messages. For example, updates on changes to the baggage policies were sent out every two hours to cabin crew, and targeted communications to flight crew, wherever they were in the world. Throughout the disruption, daily usage of the e-mail service trebled. "With CommuniGate Pro, we selected the right tool to support our globally-based, mobile workforce," stated Mr. Johnston.

Access to the e-mail service is made via the employees' ESS Portal and one secure password that can be used round-the-clock, seven days a week, not only at work but from home or when traveling. Mr. Huish added, "The use of e-mail across our business, along with the culture change to new online ways of working, is driving substantial benefits for our business".



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