Zimbra brings innovative email, calendaring and collaboration technology to the Universiti Malaysia Perlis campus

The Universiti Malaysia Perlis is an institution of higher learning located at the northernmost part of the Malaysian peninsula. As a relatively new and modern institution, the Universiti of Malaysia (UniMAP) specializes in technology and engineering studies, and has rapidly grown to over 7,500 students, faculty and staff across many campuses. UniMAP prides itself on developing entrepreneurship skills among its students.

Challenges

Founded in 2001, UniMAP grew rapidly from just 116 engineering students to 6,000 today. Over the past several years UniMAP had been using Sun iPlanet for its directory service, email and calendaring but needed a solution with extensive Web 2.0 collaboration features that could more easily scale and be deployed across its 20 different locations and large population.

They evaluated an upgrade to Sun iPlanet as well as Lotus Mail, but neither offered a best-of-breed Web experience, strong calendaring platform and compatibility with the users' diverse range of desktop systems, email clients and Web browsers all in one package. Features like document sharing, integration of mail and calendar with mobile systems, built-in spam and virus control, and scalable email architecture had become a necessity for this rapidly growing user-base. The new platform also needed to be compatible with UniMAP's directory service that would not be retired, as well as have open programming interfaces to enable customization and easy integration with the campus IT infrastructure.

The Solution

The team at UniMAP ultimately selected Zimbra Collaboration Suite (ZCS) to meet its collaboration needs because it was able to offer the advanced user experience their students, faculty and staff required and scaled well across their multiple campus locations. Zimbra's open source platform was also one of the key differentiators as compared to other solutions. UniMAP implements several other open source technologies including an open source network management system, Linux Redhat and Ubuntu Linux operating systems.

Furthermore, Zimbra's ability to work well with their existing LDAP allowed for a very smooth migration from the previous iPlanet system. As an added benefit, Zimbra's appearance was familiar to the students, faculty and staff, which allowed for a painless transition.

According to Nasrudin Abd Shukor, Director ICT Center at the Universiti Malaysia Perlis, "Zimbra is familiar for anyone that has used Microsoft Outlook – but with many added features and open source technology." Nasrudin went on to say, "UniMAP also anticipated significant cost savings by implementing Zimbra as compared to our previous system, as is evidenced when comparing the cost of licensing per user."

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA PERLIS

About

▸ Flagship public technology and engineering institution

▸ Founded in 2001, Perlis, Malaysia

▸ 6,000 students and 1,500 faculty and staff

Goals

▸ Deliver rich collaboration to a diverse range of desktops in remote locations

▸ Significantly reduce cost and administration effort

▸ Open platform with integration capabilities

Deployment

▸ ZCS on RHEL

▸ Zimbra Web Client

▸ Zimbra Mobile for iPhone and BlackBerry

▸ Serving 20 geographically remote locations

▸ IBM Blade Server HS22 for 3 MTA (Mail Transfer agent)

▸ SUN fire x4170 for Mailstore

▸ IBM System Storage SAN24 SAN Switch

▸ Cisco MDS 9216 SAN Switch

▸ IBM System Storage DS4700 and DS3400

▸ Barracuda as external MTA

Benefits

Since the implementation of ZCS, students, faculty and staff have seen many benefits, including increased efficiency and organization as a result of the campus-wide calendaring system. Academic departments at UniMAP use the Zimbra Calendar to post projects, assignments and notes – which keeps everyone informed despite being spread out over 20 different campus locations. Staff members also use the calendar to do departmental planning by forming groups and to-do lists to keep track of what has been accomplished.

Also, the Universiti has skinned Zimbra to match UniMAP's branding, so the look and feel is that of a fully customized solution built specifically for UniMAP and makes students feel they are part of a larger community. Additionally, UniMAP faculty and staff are taking advantage of Zimbra's extensive mobile features by accessing the system via mobile devices including the BlackBerry and iPhone.

"I believe that Zimbra is the leader in next-generation collaboration software, and trust that it will continue to evolve as UniMAP grows as an institution because of Zimbra's openness and flexibility", said Nasrudin Abd Shukor.

Nasrudin and a team of IT administrators are also in the process of testing several Zimlets, and plan on implementing them soon for added benefits. They are also in the planning stages of connecting Zimbra to campus systems, including the Student, HR and Financial information systems, the library, and e-kedatangan. UniMAP is in the process of training systems administrators in order to reap the benefits of these additional promising features.

As of Q1 2010, the campus is currently in the process of upgrading to the recently launched ZCS 6.0, and is looking forward to rolling out new features including the Briefcase functionality for sharing and accessing documents and files.

Nasrudin, who has been in education IT for 20 years, has used a variety of communication systems and says all fell short of providing all the features of Zimbra. He adds "all the Universiti of Malaysia Perlis - from the vice chancellor to the dean, administrative staff to the students - is fond of Zimbra and the added collaboration it has brought to the campus. We look forward to implementing additional features in the future."

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Nasrudin Abd Shukor
Director ICT Center,
Universiti Malaysia Perlis

About Zimbra

Zimbra, a division of VMware, is the leader in next-generation, open source email and collaboration. Zimbra supports both private on-premises and hosted public cloud deployments and is popular with universities, business, government and services providers.

Learn more at www.zimbra.com.

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