

Party votes for upgraded communications policy using **bluesource**

The Conservative Party conducts major upgrade of its email communications system; ensuring greater resilience, improved remote access, security and functionality enhancements.

A day doesn't pass when we don't hear another government news story or perhaps a debate about political issues that affect our country as a whole. Now more than ever governments and political parties need to be monitoring and responding to global news and related issues around the clock. Communications agility within a political party and the ability to securely converse, share and access electronic messages and information is of paramount importance in order to stay one step ahead of the issues... and the opposition.

The Conservative Party has a long history during which it has seen much change. Today, it is absolutely common place to be aware of a Party's political agenda, its pledge to the electorate and its communications strategy, but what of its internal communications strategy

Conservative Messaging Infrastructure: It's Time For Change

The Conservative Party's email messaging system was running on an Exchange 2003 infrastructure, and whilst it was by no means 'end of life', the Party recognised that greater resilience, improved user experience and enhanced remote access and security features could be gained from upgrading the system to Exchange 2007. A further project driver was the need to ensure that their wider messaging related solutions, namely their Blackberry Enterprise Server (BES) and Enterprise Vault (EV), were brought up-to-date. This would help ensure a successful migration and thereafter integration with the planned Exchange environment and in turn, ensure that users were able to take advantage of an improved push messaging solution to their

wireless handheld devices. As the Party had been early adopters of the EV system, they also wanted to review the new solution's capabilities and in turn future-proof the environment to ensure full data protection for both their users and their organisation.

The Party was finding that its users, like many others, needed 24/7 access to email both in-house and remotely, this was particularly important during periods of heightened political activity such as annual Party conferences or during the main campaigning season. As Party news is announced, an increased volume of email is received, from supporters and colleagues, but also, of course, from journalists. The Party decided it needed to improve its remote email access, both in terms of available functionality as well as availability. As part of that its Outlook Web Access solution was considered key (OWA) and they needed to identify a partner who could work with their in-house team to transfer skills at the same time as introducing the new environment. By finding the right partner they felt they would help ensure that their team would be bolstered by full industry support services to ensure 24/7 availability of this critical communications platform. In tandem, the Party also wanted to improve its business continuity operation for rapid recovery of the Exchange stores in the event of a site or server failure. This upgraded recovery process would be enacted in circumstances involving either server or full site failure.



“We are very much a forward thinking Party and when it comes to our IT and communications systems, the same rules apply,” noted Anne Nunan, Director of IT, The Conservative Party. “We, like any other similar sized organisation are heavily dependent on email communications, and the use of Blackberry’s and OWA is very extensive throughout our user community. Ultimately, the review of our messaging infrastructure was to pre-empt any foreseeable issues associated with email availability and security as well as with associated data protection requirements. The work we needed to undertake was to help ensure we had a cohesive and flexible means of accessing email remotely, as well as minimising any risks of such systems falling over and being inaccessible to our users.”



Measured Reform

The Conservative Party worked through a consultation process eventually choosing messaging experts, **bluesource**. The Party had confidence that **bluesource** would consult on the type of solution needed, ensure the mail servers were fit for purpose and provide tailored and ongoing support for the entire messaging environment.

bluesource is a leading consultancy that uses its proficiency within the Microsoft Exchange and messaging environments to help companies implement the right solution, bridging the gap between business benefit and IT. **bluesource** enables clients to use internal resources more strategically. **bluesource**'s consultants conduct a

seamless skills transfer process every step of the way, to ensure knowledge of the project and the technical IP stays within the clients' four walls. Clients are encouraged to be involved in the design to the deployment of any new systems, helping to empower those internal resources responsible for the every day running of the system. This was an extremely important issue to the Conservatives.

With studies showing that email and other messaging applications are storing as much as 75 per cent of a company's intellectual property, it's important that organisations protect their email data; especially as email has to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as well as be subject to regulatory guidelines set by governing bodies and compliance mandates.

bluesource - Partner of Choice

bluesource are committed to delivering excellent levels of service and pride themselves on developing long-term partnerships with clients, to ensure a project runs smoothly, so users are up and running within an optimum period and on completion of a project, are confident that knowledge imparted during the skills transfer process are sufficient to address any potential issues.

During the project, **bluesource** provided a full-time dedicated technical consultant and one part-time consultant, along with additional specialist resources as required to overview governance of the project. The project took a total of three months, from start to finish.

“As well as upgrading the Party's messaging system, **bluesource** worked with the CCHQ IT team and built a proof of concept test environment designed around Cluster Continuous Replication (CCR) technology. The advantage of this architecture is that it removes single point of failure presented by the storage subsystem and likewise reduces the risk of an outage on the system. By building and trialing this system in a test environment, it ensures users are comfortable with the system, its capabilities, how it works and how it needs to be supported, without subjecting live data to any potential risk. CCR provides high availability negating the need to purchase cost prohibitive Storage Area Network (SAN) requirements unlike traditional clustering methodologies.”

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