Leading Australian University chooses IBM Lotus Notes over Microsoft

- Online Corporate Software's experience with Domino

- Fast prototyping and iterative development

- Proven Security Model and LDAP web authentication

- Strong base of design elements

- Maintenance is manageable in-house

- Independent applications and databases

- Full Text and Field level searching from web applications

- Easy to create historical snapshots

- Failover managed with Domino clustering and MS Network Load Balancing

IBM Lotus Domino now powers the Faculty of Medicine's web browser over at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) to help ease student administration. Its student management tool - eMed – has been specifically built for a new medicine curriculum and heralds a new way of educational administration for the Faculty which will from now on use a single, point solution for its new Medicine program.

The innovative system, built by IBM Business Partner Online Corporate Software, is hosted on an IBM Lotus Notes and Domino platform after Microsoft's offerings were found to be of no match for Lotus in terms of simplicity, maintenance and security.

The system is expected to be used by up to 1300 students and 1700 staff over the next few years and can store more than 30,000 assignments, 10,000 scheduled events, 80,000 student comments and 2000 activity descriptions. The tool currently supports more than 200 students and 150 staff.

Business needs

"The business challenge for the Faculty of Medicine was to provide staff and students with access to information at any time and from any location," said Tim Royle, CEO, Online Corporate Software.

Jim Leeper, Medical Faculty IT Manager, UNSW said the university sector is becoming increasingly competitive as students pay more for their education.

"We need to provide systems that enhance the student experience and at the same time provide more efficient systems so that academic and administrative staff can spend more time directly supporting students," said Mr Leeper.

This meant that as well as receiving assignments and reporting test results, eMed needed to allow users to access and compare detailed course information, publish staff and student schedules and inform people of changes to schedules.

Why IBM?

Online Corporate Software developed the software after winning the contract on the strength of their Notes and Domino competencies.

A suite of Domino applications was chosen using the Lotus Notes client/ web browser for internal administration staff and web browser access for students.

"We recommended an IBM Domino server because it was an excellent fit to the technical specifications for the system," says Mr Royle.

"Domino is a database and application development platform in one package. To get equivalent functionality, we would have had to use multiple Microsoft products with unnecessary complexity – for example -- Outlook, Exchange, Visual Studio, SQL Server, Dotnet, Sharepoint etc," says Mr Royle.

True to form, the server has experienced no downtime following deployment, despite undergoing three version releases from February to June last year.

As the Faculty delivers educational services to a diverse range of local and international students, it was important that the technology encouraged collaboration.

IBM Lotus Brand Executive Hala Batainah says Lotus Domino provides a multiplatform foundation for collaboration.

"Lotus' robust document management capabilities are ideal for organisations like the Faculty of Medicine of the UNSW because they can be used to encourage collaboration between administrative staff and improve interaction between students and the Faculty," she said.

Proven results

Preliminary data from a recent satisfaction and useability survey show a 94% system performance rate for the online tool.

When asked about system performance, 91.5% of survey respondents praise eMed for its speed and 97.6% note the lack of error messages, which they say 'never' or 'only occasionally' occurred during the five-month survey period.

Jim Leeper says the survey results are consistent as there has been a drop in requests for assistance from support systems such as help lines, support request forms and help sites after the launch of eMed.

"This generally favourable user reception reflects the overall accessibility, usefulness and relevance of eMed to both students and staff," said Mr Leeper.

The survey shows that students particularly appreciate eMed's automated and personalized emails and the centrally-located systems.

"They like that fact that they could treat the system as a one-stop-shop for their timetable information, assignment and project submissions, assessment activities and results details," said Mr Leeper.

Plans are already underway for the release of eMed v2 in 2005 which will focus on user interface, specifically the effectiveness of the navigation and layout, as well as the release of an additional module.

About Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales

The Faculty of Medicine offers a wide variety of undergraduate and postgraduate programs. The core program is the undergraduate medical course. The Faculty of Medicine has developed an entirely new and innovative six year, three phase undergraduate medicine program. The program began with the Year 1 intake in 2004 and will lead to the awards of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB BS).

For more information, visit: http://www.med.unsw.edu.au and http://ome.med.unsw.edu.au/ome. nsf/website/eMed.

About Online Corporate Software

Online Corporate Software is an Advanced IBM Business Partner and Solution Developer/ISV. As well as providing application development consulting services on the Domino platform the company also provides a subscription based program at http://www.notesapps.com This allows member organisations to fast track their deployment of high quality business applications providing a wide range of ready-made solutions which can be delivered in a fraction of the time normally taken.

For more information, visit http://www.onlinecorporatesoftware.com.

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