



Trading-Desk Firm Sees More Value in Microsoft Online Services Than Google Apps

Customer: SBFI

Web Site: www.sbf.com

Customer Size: 185 employees

Country or Region: United Kingdom

Industry: Manufacturing

Partner: The Support Store

Customer Profile

With offices in London, Hong Kong, and New York, SBFI builds and sells trading-room furniture for the financial industry. SBFI employs 185 people and earns more than U.S.\$25 million annually.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Online Services
 - Microsoft Exchange Online

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To supply specialized trading desks to the financial industry, SBFI relies on effective e-mail communication. The firm needed to upgrade Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server e-mail messaging and collaboration software and wanted to switch to a hosted service. After evaluating Google Apps, SBFI found more value in Microsoft Exchange Online. Now, SBFI employees have the reliable, familiar messaging tools they need to maintain high levels of customer service.

Business Needs

Based in London, England, SBFI designs, manufactures, and distributes trading-room furniture for the financial industry. SBFI trading desks are designed to accommodate multiple computer processors and monitors, while regulating heat and creating an efficient workspace. The company maintains offices in London, Hong Kong, and New York, as well as manufacturing facilities in the United States and the United Kingdom. With approximately 185 employees, SBFI manages a worldwide client base among

major investment firms, earning more than U.S.\$25 million annually.

Effective, efficient e-mail communication is essential to SBFI’s business. Employees in sales offices work with other offices around the world and collaborate with colleagues in the company’s design and manufacturing facilities. Executives and salespeople travel often across the globe and need to work from remote locations. The company also needs high e-mail storage capacity to maintain the information necessary to provide long-



term service continuity. And SBFI customers who work in fast-paced financial markets expect real-time communication and immediate responses.

SBFI managed its e-mail communication with Microsoft Exchange 2000 Server e-mail messaging and collaboration software. The technology was nearing the end of its life cycle and had become a challenge to manage efficiently. Working with its IT partner, The Support Store—a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner—SBFI began looking for a solution to replace its aging e-mail messaging environment.

"It was time to come into the twenty-first century," says Phil Clay, Head of Business Development at SBFI. "We needed a messaging solution that would be reliable, cost effective, simple to manage, and easy to use, and that would enhance our ability to work remotely."

Solution

SBFI and The Support Store decided to use a managed messaging service hosted in the "cloud"—a large external data center accessed through the Internet. The Support Store recommended Microsoft Exchange Online, part of the Microsoft Business Productivity Online Standard Suite offered through Microsoft Online Services. But before making its decision, SBFI also evaluated Gmail from Google, a component of the Google Apps hosted service.

Initially, SBFI considered Google Apps because of Google's aggressive pricing. However, after comparing the two solutions, SBFI decided to update its messaging environment with Microsoft Exchange Online because it offered trusted, proven technology and the features that SBFI employees were already using. Also, SBFI

relies on The Support Store to manage its entire IT infrastructure, and the solutions integrator could not support Google Apps. Despite Google's low per-month quote, SBFI calculated that it would receive higher value with Exchange Online.

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During a trial of Google Apps, SBFI users could not replicate many functions that they had come to rely on in their e-mail messages. For instance, they could not attach documents to messages in templates that included the company letterhead and other branding. "If you have to struggle to format every quote or letter, then you risk not getting projects out on time," says Clay. "We were concerned that using Gmail could potentially compromise productivity."

In 2009, The Support Store helped SBFI migrate 35 e-mail accounts in the company's London and Hong Kong offices to Exchange Online. The transition went so smoothly that it was essentially invisible to users, and SBFI anticipates moving the entire enterprise to Exchange Online.

Benefits

By updating its e-mail environment with Exchange Online, SBFI is providing its employees with reliable messaging that they can access in the office, at home, or while traveling. And because the company chose Exchange Online over Google Apps, its employees can use familiar tools that help enhance productivity and customer service.

Reliable Messaging Environment

With Exchange Online, SBFI has an advanced, up-to-date messaging system that is less likely to fail or cause unnecessary and costly delays. And because messages are stored in external resources hosted by Microsoft Online Services, the company can now provide individual users with the e-mail storage capacity they require. "People don't have to worry about what they're saving," says Clay. "They just send and receive e-mail messages and get on with their jobs."

Enhanced Mobility

SBFI can now offer its highly mobile workforce enhanced access to e-mail with Exchange Online. Whether employees are traveling between Europe and Asia, or just working from home, they always have instant access to their e-mail accounts.

"Due to bad weather, we recently had to shut down a facility for several days," says Clay. "But because people had access to Exchange Online, they could continue working from home, doing the same thing they would be doing in the office."

Enhanced Productivity, Efficient Service

Because SBFI employees are using familiar—albeit updated and enhanced—messaging tools that interoperate with the other tools they use every day, such as Microsoft Office Word and Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet software, they can continue to offer SBFI customers fast-paced service. "Our customers are traders who expect information in real time," says Clay. "With Exchange Online we can maintain the efficiency we need to respond quickly to our customers' needs."