

affinity

Successful ECM adoption through Outlook

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Gerald Weinmann, senior applications developer and SharePoint consultant at Brose.

Repstor affinity reduces Outlook PST storage & enhances SharePoint collaboration at global automotive supplier Brose

Brose is a large global automotive supplier. Its mechatronic systems for doors, seats or electric motors and drives can be found in every second new vehicle around the world today. The company, which is over a century old and is still family owned today, employs more than 25,000 people across 60 locations in 23 countries.

Brose depends on IT to enable dispersed global teams to collaborate on customer projects. It means it can field the right knowledge experts without any concerns about location. The company has 15,000 Microsoft Office users internationally, Exchange mailbox servers sited in Europe, Asia and North America, and a central SharePoint farm located in Germany.

Email storage growth

Despite having central file shares and SharePoint collaboration portals, Brose's project teams were defaulting to email to hold and retrieve project-related information and documents, in the form of Outlook personal folders (PST data files). A lot of time could be spent locating the latest version of content, and the over-reliance on PST files located on the local network was consuming a lot of expensive storage. Also, if users were unavailable or left the company, there was no easy way to get at the information held in their email folders.

PST file usage had been growing significantly, so the company needed to address this, ideally getting rid of PST files altogether. There was a desire to move more users over to laptops and migrate to Office 2016, but the ongoing issue of email management presented a barrier because of the way content had previously been filed. This was generating heavy traffic to the support desk.

Brose did have the means of sharing emails and attachments via SharePoint, but to do this users had to consciously upload content to SharePoint. If something was in their Outlook inbox, there was no good way to connect it to SharePoint; there was no means to manipulate the email's metadata.

Repstor affinity solves the problem

Brose sought a product that would enable email content to be captured easily and seamlessly in a network file share or SharePoint document library where everyone in the project team would have access to it. After researching the available options, the IT department invited a shortlist of three vendors to present their software to Brose's stakeholders. Repstor and one other company were then asked to install and configure a pilot implementation so Brose could do a comparison test.

"Repstor affinity was by far the best fit," says Gerald Weinmann, a senior applications developer and SharePoint consultant at Brose. "It integrated very well with Outlook's interfaces and it is very intuitive to use."

The expectation is that Repstor affinity™ will become the standard means of storing and managing email content at Brose. With this in mind, the company has invested in a 5,000-user licence with the option for a further 10,000 information workers to use a light version of the product where needed.

More than 2,000 Brose knowledge workers already use the full system globally, and the product has been

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embraced enthusiastically. "Acceptance has been very good," Mr Weinmann says. The rollout has been on a regional basis, dictated by demand. A high percentage of users are currently concentrated in Germany where the bulk of customer project management is concentrated, but as word spreads, user groups across the world are embracing it enthusiastically, from the US to China.

Benefits extend to the IT team as well as users

For the IT department, Repstor is rapidly reducing dependence on PST files as it had hoped. But the real winners are Brose's customer project teams whose lives have become much easier. The ability to share emails and find information more quickly is saving them a lot of time. Every email on a file share or in SharePoint is now found via a global SharePoint search. As Brose's customer projects are typically global – the project manager could be in China, the engineers in Germany and the customer in the US - it makes collaboration much easier if everything is in a dedicated customer project portal on SharePoint.

As part of the plan to get users to collaborate more instinctively, Brose has increased its Exchange email capacity from 300Mb to 4Gb, using cheaper storage. This will allow users to have access to project email and documents when they are off line, in addition to their own email – a very useful option supported by Repstor affinity.

The right product for the job

Repstor's commitment to Brose's email archiving transformation cemented its success. "Repstor's dedication, eagerness and responsiveness were very impressive from day one," Mr Weinmann says. "They are clearly very passionate about their affinity solution, which targets everyday pain points for information workers, transforming the user experience.

"It was definitely the right option for us," he concludes. "Compared to other tools, Repstor affinity is a superior product – with its option of offline availability, the file share feature (no one else has the connectors that Repstor offers), and the look and feel of Outlook. The performance is excellent too. It all adds up to a great user experience."



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