CASE STUDY:

Combination of FaxCore and etherFAX Earn High Marks at University of Maryland for Implementation of Hybrid Fax Solution

Organization:

University of Maryland

Industry:

Education

Challenge:

Deliver a centralized fax solution for administrative offices located throughout the campus

Solutions:

- FaxCore
- etherFAX

Results:
- Integrated and easy-to-use solution for fax communications.
- Improved communications across the university as a whole – from students, to faculty, to staff members.
- Eliminate telecom infrastructure, which dramatically reduces costs.

The University of Maryland, College Park is a public research university, the flagship campus of the University System of Maryland, and the original 1862 land-grant institution in the State. It is one of only 62 members of the Association of American Universities, an organization composed of the leading research universities in the United States and Canada. The University of Maryland is committed to achieving excellence as the State's primary center of research and graduate education and the institution of choice for undergraduate students of exceptional ability and promise.

Challenge

With more than 24,000 undergraduate and 7,000 graduate students, the University of Maryland relies heavily on technology as a communications tool between students, faculty and staff.

In addition, the campus includes a number of administrative offices – from the President's office to admissions building – which are widely dispersed across the campus. This configuration requires information to be gathered and passed through different locations on a daily basis.

"As a large university, we needed a fax server solution that included record gathering and a single point of fax service for the campus administrative offices," explained Robert Riggs, Associate Director System Development at University of Maryland. "We basically wanted a new technology solution that conducted business in a more efficient manner, and one that was cost effective for the university as a whole."

At first, the university considered implementing FaxCore – a provider of fax server solutions for enterprise organizations, telecoms, SaaS and specialized ASP providers. However, they quickly realized that the solution would not be a fit because of upfront infrastructure costs associated with faxboards, fault-tolerance and telecom expenses.

Solution

In order to deliver a fax solution that would give them the ability to capture and store all of their previous paper-based documents electronically, the University of Maryland selected FaxCore with etherFAX. etherFAX enables companies to extend their existing fax server solutions to the cloud. At the University of Maryland, the first application of FaxCore and etherFAX occurred within the Graduate Admissions office, which includes records for incoming students.

"Once documents are received, they are routed into our document management system," said Mr. Riggs. "One of the many features that is appealing about FaxCore with etherFAX is the extensive support for routing faxes as electronic images and options to support workflow into other applications."

The pilot project for Graduate Admissions provides students a choice of printing either a linear barcode cover page for mail-in documents (transcripts require a hard copy) which are directly scanned into the document management system and its barcode reader, or a matrix barcode for the FaxCore barcode reader. The barcode contains an application ID (6 digits) unique to each student applicant.

A Java servlet module receives the faxed images and index information in two HTML requests (POST or PUT) in a way similar to an HTML FILE upload transfer. An Oracle database table helps to track the transmissions. Once both request objects are received (image and index information) the images are page burst and batched for submission to the university's document management system.

"Our OIT services for the administration section of the university primary support is for Java and Oracle products," explained Mr. Riggs. "I've written a bridge between our new hybrid fax solution and our document imaging system in Java. We also use FaxCore and etherFAX services to route fax images and index information to a Java J2EE application running on our IBM Websphere Application server."

According to Mr. Riggs, the fax server solution offered easy integration. "The general ease of setup and configuration were other key factors that led to our decision to implement FaxCore with etherFAX."

The Results

With the combination of FaxCore and etherFAX, all telecom infrastructure has been eliminated at the University of Maryland, dramatically reducing costs. The solution has also improved efficiencies and time management throughout the administrative offices.

"The implementation has made it possible for the University of Maryland to have a single point of fax service," added Mr. Riggs. "A fully hosted solution was not an option, as we could not achieve the tight integration that was required."

The FaxCore and etherFAX service has allowed the university to concentrate on business logic and enable a working system faster, since it frees the university from having to develop the communications link to the campus phone system.

"As cost allows, we will continue with the FaxCore and etherFAX services, which offer the best failure recovery options among its other useful features," said Mr. Riggs.

In the future, the University of Maryland plans to implement the fax service solution to other administrative departments. "We plan to use FaxCore's domain management tools to manage department billing and to allocate ports and phone numbers to the other offices in the near future," said Mr. Riggs.