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OnSite

Electronic Arts and Good Technology: Mobile Messaging to Extend Competitive Advantage

Executive Summary

Electronic Arts (EA) is the world's leading independent developer and publisher of interactive entertainment software for personal computers and advanced entertainment systems. As a global organization, EA needed a way to make mobile information access work better for key executives and sales personnel. The company had an existing mobile e-mail solution in place, but sought to extend that functionality to a broader set of applications. Good Technology's GoodLink System provided EA with always-up-to-date access to both e-mail and company information, with no cradle required.

Business Challenge

EA required a comprehensive wireless e-mail and data solution that would allow its executives and sales force to be more productive while out of the office or traveling. The company had approximately 500 employees deployed on research in Motion's Blackberry devices, but management found that the devices were used as an e-mail alert system rather than as a comprehensive wireless corporate e-mail solution. Because the Blackberry solution depended on cradles for synchronization, EA's sales force was still dependent on access to their desktops. As a result, executives and sales personnel on the road had to bring their laptops with them in order to synchronize their e-mail, calendars, and contact lists.

EA looked for a new wireless solution that synchronized data in real time, without relying on users' laptops to access e-mail and update calendars and contact lists. EA also wanted a mobile data solution that would support e-mail attachments, in particular documents that could be read by Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. More specifically, EA sought to enable mobile access to Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Powerpoint) files used for account status inquiries. "We use Word documents and Excel spreadsheets extensively," said Marc West, CIO of EA.

Selection Criteria and Evaluation

EA wanted to make the necessary upgrades while also lowering ongoing mobile messaging costs. Additionally, the solution had to run in a mixed Exchange 5.5 and Exchange 2000 environment. EA looked at a variety of different products before

choosing Good Technology's GoodLink wireless messaging system. Other vendors evaluated by EA had the following problems:

- Palm's solution was overly complex and highly proprietary
- Danger Research's Hiptop solution was not yet fully developed
- Solutions based on Microsoft's Pocket PC platform did not offer sufficient battery life
- The Blackberry solution did not offer enough functionality — EA estimated that Blackberry's developer, RIM, was roughly eight to 12 months behind Good Technology
- Smartphones and communicators were deemed immature, and typically had a shorter battery life compared to mobile phones

As a result, EA began talking with Good Technology in February 2002, and quickly began a beta of the GoodLink software soon thereafter.

The Deployment

After a pilot program in the IT department, the first business users to deploy the new solution were key executives and employees in the Operations department. The GoodLink rollout extended from there to include engineers and managers in departments across the company.

Because the Good Technology solution is server-based, deployment took only four hours for the first 15 users. EA dedicated half an hour per user to install the Good solution, with ongoing support averaging half an hour per user per month. With the GoodLink server software, the IT department can remotely diagnose e-mail bottlenecks and resolve problems quickly via a Web-based console. "We push the envelope at EA in terms of quickly responding to inquiries, requests, et cetera, and Good focused a sizable amount of energy on meeting our needs," said West.

The Results

With the new GoodLink mobile data solution, EA users can effectively carry devices with constant, wirelessly-synchronized access to Outlook. Users on the road are now more responsive to clients and colleagues. They are able to view attached documents, respond, and view Excel spreadsheets in real-time. Many users no longer bring their laptops on the road; they can instead use the GoodLink-based devices to manage their company information.

EA has found that GoodLink allows its users to take more immediate action on critical e-mails and better manage their Outlook accounts, with the added benefit of a more intuitive user interface. West says that the ability to manage the desktop in real time, including e-mail and attachments, has been of immeasurable value. For the same investment that it would have made in a competing solution, EA finds that it is getting more value and increased employee productivity with Good-

Link. According to West, the decreased IT administrative costs resulting from the zero-desktop installation architecture of Good Technology's software has saved approximately one hour in IT administrative costs per device, per month. EA has saved half an hour per month in ongoing IT support

Approximately 150 users (50%) at EA have switched to GoodLink running on RIM hardware at this point. As the Blackberry contracts expire, EA is migrating all of its users to GoodLink, with plans to phase out use of the Blackberry platform altogether. "The functionality of the GoodLink software has been so well received that people who would not normally carry a mobile device are carrying them," said West. "People within the organization who didn't carry mobile messaging devices are now asking for GoodLink."

Although EA's existing RIM devices can be used to run the GoodLink software, users prefer the interface, display, and keyboard on Good's G100 device. EA plans to transition from its existing RIM devices to Good's G100 devices as new users are activated.

In the future, EA intends to adopt Good's GoodInfo wireless information system, which will enable wireless access to a wider range of applications from its new mobile data platform. The company plans to first deploy mobile access to web-enabled sales force automation applications using GoodInfo, to help streamline the order status updating process and provide the field sales force with access to data in real time.

Aberdeen Conclusions

The Good system allowed EA to improve data access and management and cut administrative costs. It also establishes a foundation for future applications. Users quickly transitioned to the new solution. At the same time, EA's IT administrators continue to support a mixed environment for both the former and newly adopted mobile data solution. This flexibility and ease of transition is of critical value, and underscores Good's ability to acquire new users without being intrusive to existing IT architectures. As a result, EA was able to realize its goal for an upgraded mobile messaging solution, and transition smoothly from RIM to Good.

To provide us with your feedback on this research, please go to www.aberdeen.com/feedback.

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