



The University of Dundee

The University of Dundee implemented Novell® Teaming to create automated workflows for its accounting department. By tracking orders through an auditable approval process, and integrating with Novell GroupWise® to communicate with the relevant staff members, the Novell solution helps tighten financial controls and frees up accounting staff from tedious, low-value administrative work.

Overview

The University of Dundee, in Scotland, is one of the UK's leading academic institutions, recognised for its expertise across a range of disciplines including science, medicine, engineering and art. The University has 4,000 staff across three campuses and four colleges, each with between two and five schools, serving a total population of 24,000 students.

Challenge

With a largely fixed annual income, The University of Dundee wanted to improve control over procurement expenditure, and decided to introduce a commitment accounting system. Where conventional accounting systems tend to be retrospective, commitment accounting looks ahead and shows what proportion of the total budget is already assigned to future purchases.

During the rollout of the new system, the accounts team discovered a large number of incomplete orders. While these were relatively easy to detect, the need to manually track down and follow up with the staff member who placed each order placed a heavy administrative burden on the team. Accounting staff also needed to manually escalate to the relevant manager if they received no response within the specified time-limit.

Essentially, there was a gap between the accounts system—CODA Financials—and the University's Novell GroupWise e-mail platform, and a clear opportunity for workflow automation to eliminate low-value administrative work.

Solution

The IT function at the University of Dundee considered building a workflow solution using Microsoft* SharePoint*, but concluded that it would be costly to set up and test, and that it would not offer a close fit with the existing infrastructure and skill sets. Instead, the organisation selected Novell Teaming, and worked with Salford Software, a Novell Platinum Partner™, to deploy the solution and create the first workflows.

"We had been testing a beta version of Novell Teaming when we first became aware of the challenge faced by the accounting team," said Mary Shrimpton, E-mail Service Coordinator at the University of Dundee. "Novell Teaming offered the functionality we needed in a cost-effective package that integrated extremely well with our Novell GroupWise environment."

In the past, accounting staff at the University needed to manually identify incorrect orders and chase up the relevant person to resolve

University of Dundee at a glance:

Internationally acclaimed university with 24,000 students

■ Industry:

Education

■ Location:

UK

■ Products and Services:

Novell Teaming

Novell GroupWise

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

■ Results:

- Reduced administrative burden for accounting staff
- Enabled automated follow-up and escalation through workflows
- Freed up staff to focus on core tasks

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the issues. With Novell Teaming, they can simply pull a copy of the invoice in question into a teamroom and activate an automated workflow to perform the follow-up. The workflow includes deadlines and a standard management escalation path, providing a fully auditable approval system that leaves accounting staff free to focus on their core tasks. The workflow functionality in Novell Teaming effectively links the accounts software to Novell GroupWise, enabling the approvals process for purchasing to be handled automatically and entirely by e-mail.

The University runs Novell Teaming on SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server, and is in the process of migrating its Novell GroupWise environment from NetWare® to Linux*.

“We are aiming to move everything we can from Microsoft* Windows* to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, which offers a more stable and secure platform, and one that we are more comfortable operating,” said Shrimpton. “Novell GroupWise itself is a core solution for the University: we have 28,000 users, rising to 50,000 during the summer, when we provide temporary accounts to new applicants. We manage that entire environment with just two people, making it an extremely cost-effective solution.”

Results

Using Novell Teaming to provide automated workflows for the accounting team has

reduced administration and enabled closer focus on core activities. In addition to saving considerable time and effort, the Novell solution eliminates tedious, low-value tasks, improving job satisfaction and reducing the chance of human error.

“The time and effort required to follow up on orders and send reminders represented a significant drain on staff resources in the accounting department,” said Shrimpton. “Novell Teaming has enabled us to solve a lot of little problems that previously added up to a major administrative headache. It has also visibly reduced the paperwork in the accounting department, making an appreciable difference.”

The positive feedback from the accounting department is creating interest among other potential users at the University. The IT department already uses the software to create project teams and simplify reporting on project status, and several academic departments also plan to use the solution.

“Novell Teaming is able to solve many of the challenges of communicating effectively within a large organisation,” said Shrimpton. “The professional service skills and excellent ongoing support from Salford Software mean that we can easily roll out the solution to new sets of users, extending the time- and cost-savings across the University.”



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