

THE ROYAL
BOROUGH OF



KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Local Authority Cuts Costs and Improves Service with Microsoft Solution

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The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) has implemented a new Microsoft-powered identity integration solution with the help of implementation partner Metaconnections. The product gives the local authority a single view of all its employees, enabling it to amend information centrally across 11 disparate directories and databases. Reduced development times for new integration projects and the automation of manual records management are generating substantial cost savings for the borough.

Situation

Access to the latest information on employees and contractors is critical for efficient management in any organisation. Personal details, such as bank account numbers and addresses, are required to administer a range of functions such as payroll accurately. At the same time, employee details must be up to date so access to offices and IT systems can be controlled. But managing the required information effectively can be a time consuming and costly process.

David Tidey, Head of Information Systems, RBKC, says: "We worked out that 'identity' information relating to our 3,000 employees and other resources, such as PCs and telephones, is stored in 11 disparate databases and directories across the organisation. This arrangement was making it very difficult to manage IT access rights and other critical business functions effectively."

For example, in 2002, an audit of Microsoft® Exchange email addresses at the local authority found that 72 employees who still had active mailboxes had already left the organisation, posing significant risks to system security.

Furthermore, information about employees was sent to the relevant departments using paper forms filled in by the HR department. As a result, it was difficult to tell whether information on staff had been updated across all RBKC's disparate databases.

Tidey says: "It was difficult to get an accurate list of phone numbers and email addresses for RBKC employees. This was not only a problem for internal communications between colleagues. It also affected our ability to deliver the best possible service levels to citizens that call, email or write in with queries."

RBKC needed a new solution to address these key challenges. While it might have seemed logical to implement a single directory to hold all identity information about users, machines, networks and applications in the organisation, this would require the complete replacement of all existing IT systems.

Solution Overview

Customer Profile

RBKC works to provide services which meet the needs of all who live, work or visit the area. Whether it is going to school, borrowing from a library or using social services, the council is working to ensure services operate smoothly and efficiently.

Business Situation

The local authority needed to integrate data from 11 disparate directories and databases across the enterprise to gain a clearer view of its employees and resources. This would reduce the cost of managing and updating critical information.

Solution

Microsoft® Identity Integration Server (MIIS) 2003, implemented by metadirectory services consultant Metaconnections.

Benefits

- Better integration of 'identity' data
- Automated data management processes
- Up to date contact information
- Platform for the future
- Winning business partnerships

Software and Services

Microsoft Identity Integration Server (MIIS) 2003 Enterprise Edition

Microsoft Windows® Server 2003

Microsoft .NET Framework

Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000

Microsoft Visual Basic® .NET

Partner

Metaconnections



Instead, RBKC wanted to integrate data from disparate sources across the enterprise to gain a clearer view of its employees and resources, whilst leaving the underlying data sources in place.

The ideal solution would need to connect a range of directory services, databases and applications in order to share the appropriate identity information across the organisation. It would also have to distribute any changes made throughout all related repositories. This would provide a single view of critical information and ensure that related identity data remains consistent across the enterprise at all times.

Solution

In 2002, RBKC responded to a marketing initiative from Metaconnections. The company is a Microsoft partner that specialises in the integration of identity information - data relating to an organisation's employees and other resources and often stored in disparate repositories. Metaconnections is also the first company in the UK to focus exclusively on Microsoft Identity Integration Server (MIIS) 2003, formerly called Microsoft Metadirectory Services (MMS).

RBKC engaged Metaconnections to help address its data management challenges. To achieve this, Metaconnections proposed, designed and implemented an MIIS-powered solution with the initial aim of integrating RBKC's HR, access control, e-mail and telephone directory systems.

MIIS is a centralised service that integrates and stores identity information from multiple directories to provide a unified view of employees and resources. In doing so, it becomes extremely easy to match records from disparate data repositories and to flag anomalies such as active records for employees who have left the organisation.

MIIS has been used to integrate RBKC's two most important sources of employee and resource information—the HR system and the access control system which authorises staff to enter council offices. Metaconnections has also successfully used the technology to integrate data from the authority's Microsoft Exchange address book and existing electronic employee telephone directory. Data in all these systems can now be updated quickly and effectively, ensuring they are current at all times.

MIIS enables the automatic provisioning and de-provisioning of access rights and other changes in employee status using Active Directory, an essential component of the Microsoft Windows Server family. This technology enables organisations to manage data centrally in distributed computing environments. Because data from HR systems and the access control system was integrated using MIIS, RBKC now has the ability to give all the right access privileges to new starters and remove them when people leave.

The RBKC solution is the first customer implementation of MIIS 2003 in the UK. The product, which went to manufacture on June 26, 2003, is also the first Microsoft application to be built exclusively on the Microsoft .NET Framework. The proprietary data store and scripting language of previous versions have been replaced with a Microsoft SQL Server™ back-end. Developers can also use any one of 20 .NET compatible programming languages, including Microsoft Visual Basic® .NET.

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David Tidey
Head of Information Systems
Royal Borough of Kensington
and Chelsea

Benefits

Better Identity Integration

Because MIIS is built using the Microsoft .NET Framework and incorporates Common Language Runtime (CLR), it enables developers to create identity integration solutions using their programming language of choice. This means RBKC can capitalise on its existing in-house skill set.

The .NET Framework also enables MIIS to integrate easily with any system or device. The use of XML and Web services enables the integration of data sources residing on any hardware or software platform.

Tidey says: "MIIS 2003 and the .NET Framework provide the flexibility we need to integrate our identity information quickly and easily in our language of choice. And because the system uses XML, we can also be sure that any internal system can be integrated quickly and easily."

"Integrating a new directory used to take us weeks and cost as much as £15,000 as an *ad hoc* project. One example of this was code we wrote to extract information from our HR database and push it into our financial system. We can now do all the development work required for this kind of project using MIIS 2003 in just a few days and for a few thousand pounds."

Automated Data Management

As well as reducing the costs associated with *ad hoc* integration projects, MIIS 2003 also reduces administrative costs and generates rapid return on investment for RBKC.

Tidey says: "The initial MIIS implementation was not expensive for a system of this size. But we are also finding that the system reduces costs because it is much easier to administer than the custom integration initiatives we had in place before. The main reason for this is that data is updated automatically across all integrated directories where this was previously done manually. As a result, we estimate we will save £25,000 annually."

Up To Date Contact Information

Now, RBKC employees can access clean, current data from across the organisation. By matching data sources, MIIS flags anomalies. It also implements changes to data across all integrated data sources, ensuring that no directory becomes inaccurate.

Tidey says: "Before, we had email accounts open for employees who left the organisation a year ago. There were also problems getting comprehensive lists of employee telephone numbers and email addresses.

"MIIS 2003 enables us to pull all our identity information together and gives us a clear picture of all our people and resources. Internal communication is also easier and less expensive because we have an email address and telephone number to hand for everyone.

"Most importantly, better quality identity data enables us to deliver unprecedented levels of service to the public. Before, it was difficult to put people in touch with the right members of staff at RBKC. Now, it is a fast, simple process to find appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses."

"We had absolute confidence that Metaconnections would deliver the best possible service when it came to getting RBKC started with MIIS. Now that the solution is up and running, it is clear that our confidence was well founded."

Steve Plank
Architectural Engineer
Microsoft

Platform for the Future

MIIS 2003 provides a scalable solution that is capable of integrating potentially any number of data sources and employees. As such it is equally beneficial to organisations, whatever their size.

Tidey says: "This is a long term project. We have identified at least 11 data sources that we will need to integrate across RBKC. Examples are a call logging system for helpdesk requests and a directory of telephones in the call centre, neither of which is ever up to date. We also have two separate e-mail systems supporting local schools and housing management that we plan to integrate. With MIIS 2003, we have a platform that enables us to meet these challenges, irrespective of the number of directories or employees."

Winning Business Partnerships

As a Microsoft partner and MIIS specialist, Metaconnections was a clear choice for delivering the implementation at RBKC.

Steve Plank, Architectural Engineer, Microsoft, says: "We had absolute confidence that Metaconnections would deliver the best possible service when it came to getting RBKC started with MIIS. Now that the solution is up and running, it is clear that our confidence was well founded."

Tidey says: "We are delighted with what Metaconnections has done for us using MIIS 2003. Their approach has been very professional throughout the project. As the icing on the cake, the company is training our people to carry out further development internally. That means we will benefit from its expertise on an ongoing basis."

For More Information

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For more information about Metaconnections products and services, visit the Web site at:

<http://www.metaconnections.co.uk>

For more information about the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, visit the Web site at:

<http://www.rbkc.gov.uk>

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