

Is There Room in Your Company for a PMO?

By Doug Brower

Clients are always interested in trends that C/D/H consultants recognize at other businesses. This is the main reason our Michigan Technology Leadership Index (MTLI) reports have garnered such positive feedback. One of these recognizable trends is the broadening adoption of Project Management Offices (PMO's) within our client base.

The PMO is the group that defines and maintains the standards of process, related to project management, within the organization.

A Project Management Office can be the physically smallest office in your company. The reason for this is that for most companies, the PMO is not a place, but a set of theories and practices of sound project management principles. For some companies, these practices are housed in a new office, but for most, the PMO is a "virtual office". The PMO is the group that defines and maintains the standards of process, related to project management, within the organization. The PMO strives to standardize and introduce economies of repetition in the visioning and execution of projects. It seems that people are no longer just talking about PMO implementation; a lot of our clients are now taking steps to implement a PMO, to work on IT project governance, and to implement formal management around the IT project portfolio.

There are a number of reasons to start a PMO. With a constant stream of bad news about the economy in the past few years, it should be noted that cutting IT costs should not be among the goals of a PMO. Rather, doing the right projects at the right time and having them all well executed are goals that a PMO can achieve.



CIO magazine and others have documented the reasons for implementing a PMO very well. However, these may or may not fit our clients. Reasons that we have consistently heard across our client base are the following:

- The IT project backlog is growing and everybody wants a piece of IT's time. We've had discussions with more than one client who has hardware, software, and consulting fees in an approved budget for a project, but needs to actively campaign for internal project resources. Determining which project to accelerate and which to put on hold calls for a standard method of measure across all projects. This can be accomplished by a PMO.
- Multiple large projects are active at once. Our clients are no longer able to manage large projects (in a serial fashion) while juggling other smaller projects and supportive demands. Multiple projects or even more likely, large initiatives with multiple interconnected projects are definitely the norm now. Having a standard way to manage resources and track and report project status is very important to success.
- The impact of IT project failure for the organization is increasing. IT has been called to play a more active role in business success. As IT projects are becoming more high profile, more time sensitive and more directly in line with business needs, success is becoming even more crucial. Accountability for project missteps is increasingly present at our clients, and rightly so.

There is no one recipe for success in developing a PMO, but there are real pitfalls to avoid. Implementing a PMO that doesn't fit with your organization is essentially adding the burden of a new layer of management to each project, which will absolutely decrease productivity. Two main rules of thumb are:

- A working dialog with 'C level' management is essential
- The role of the PMO needs to match the current organizational management philosophy. For example, an organization that makes decisions by committee would not do well to implement a very directive PMO.

C/D/H has followed solid project management philosophy with our projects for many years. We have made strong investments in this area and currently have four Project Management Professionals (PMP) on staff. We are currently engaged to manage client projects, to develop PM Offices, and to manage project portfolios for our clients. Although our office space is limited with the growth we are experiencing, we can make "room" for a new office, the Project Management Office. Let us know if you have questions on your project methodology.



Jim Wilbur Joins C/D/H in Royal Oak

We are thrilled to announce that Jim Wilbur, one of the Midwest's finest Access Manager consultants, has joined C/D/H. Jim brings over 28 years experience in information technology and has most recently been involved in architecting, designing, and deploying Access and Identity Management solutions for Fortune 500 customers. Jim is a great resource to add to our Access and Identity Management team (AIM). He will be focusing on deploying solutions from both Microsoft and Novell.

R U Ready for R2?

By Mark King

Office Communications Server (OCS) 2007 R2 was announced at VoiceCON Amsterdam and is expected to be released to manufacturing (RTM) in February 2009. Building on the momentum from OCS 2007, R2 focuses on providing improvement to the features that fell short in the current release.

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Complaints about OCS 2007:

1. From the IT Staff: What is up with this edge server and why does it need a public IP (or 3)?
2. From the Road Warrior: Why can't users dial into Live Meeting from a phone?
3. From the Administrative Staff: There has got to be an easier way to transfer and control calls for executives.

We should probably start from the beginning. OCS 2007 was released in November 2007, and its release gave Microsoft just the boost they needed to compete in the unified communications space, primarily against Cisco (see previous Technology Report articles or C/D/H blog postings). Live Communication Server 2005 was a good instant messaging program and Live Meeting 2005 was an acceptable hosting service for web meetings, but WebEx was leaps and bounds beyond Live Meeting 2005.

So here we are, just over a year after the initial release of OCS, and we are already buzzing about the great new features. Let's get to the point.

New Server Roles:

Application Sharing Server – Desktop Sharing, a feature available only in Live Meeting in OCS 2007, can now be done natively in Communicator when the application sharing server role is deployed. This means that even unauthenticated users can use the new features in Communicator Web Access (CWA). The kludgy switch to Live Meeting has been corrected!

Group Chat Server – This includes three new roles for group chat functions (Lookup, Channel and Web Service). I haven't heard many requests for this, but hey, it's a cool feature. This also requires an additional client to be installed on top of Communicator which includes a little integration.

Monitoring Server – By combining the Call Data Records (CDR) and Quality of Experience (QoE) into a single server role, we are now able to view real-time data without having to deploy archiving services.

So I talked about the complaints earlier, here are the new features:

Dial-In Conferencing – A true conference bridge solution; some features are even better than typical conference bridges. This solution enables authenticated users (users with an Exchange mailbox and pin) to join the conference and talk before the leader joins while non-authenticated users must wait on hold.

HD Video – Video capability of 720p 24 frames per second (Television quality is 30 fps) is now integrated into the video conferencing system. The default is VGA 640x480 with the support for HD (1024x720, 16:9 aspect ratio) and the added support for Polycom and Tandberg.

Attendant Console – A pretty slick console is now available for administrative assistants, receptionists, or executive secretaries and allows them to answer, transfer or park calls easily. This console is completely customizable and is integrated to OCS.

Voice Enhancements – Tap tap tap tap tap tap..... Oh sorry, if you have ever used OCS with your laptop's microphone and speakers you know what I mean. Echo cancellation, volume regulation, comfort noise, down-level codec selection and even a feature to remove that darn keyboard noise are all improvements that those of us using OCS every day are looking forward to.

New Group Policies – Group policies are now available and allow automatic client updating via Windows Server Update Service (WSUS). There are also policies that can disable instant messaging for environments where presence is wanted, but IM is not allowed by regulation or policy.

Hardware Platform – OCS 2007 R2 roles and features are supported on an all 64-bit architecture and 64-bit operating system. Thankfully, Windows Server 2008 is supported for all R2 Roles and Features as this has been a solid platform for our clients deploying Exchange 2007 SP1.

Microsoft is known best for their vast product visions. OCS 2007 was planned to be the leap into unified communications. Wave 13, which is now known as OCS 2007 R2, is meant to add to the features provided in the original release and remove features from the PBX and other separate systems. With Wave 14, Microsoft will no longer be saying “VoIP as you are”; they'll be saying “Unplug the PBX”.

C/D/H is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and a Microsoft Unified Communications Voice Partner that has highly certified consultants in both the Microsoft and Cisco. If you are interested in Unified Communications or Unified Messaging, please contact me at mark@cdh.com. Also, don't forget to visit www.cdhtalkstech.com or www.unplugthepbx.com and subscribe to our blogs.



C/D/H Recently Appeared on Detroit's WDIV

As a proud participant in the Connectech & IAMCP Career Fair, C/D/H was highlighted on Detroit's WDIV as a premiere Microsoft partner in the area. Paul Hillman and other C/D/Hers were interviewed in Royal Oak and in Grand Rapids over our Microsoft Roundtables. Viewers got an inside look into what it's like to work at C/D/H. Hopefully you've had the chance to see the footage. If not, be sure to let us know and we'll get you a copy.

Wireless 802.11n: Now, Later, or Never

By Erik Gilreath

Can you remember? Just 10 years ago wireless connectivity was mostly in the realm of special effects seen in the movies. There was a wireless standard but it had just come out, and the access points that were available tended to be spotty and problematic on their best days. Fast forward to now and a good number of people have wireless access in their homes and wouldn't imagine purchasing a laptop without wireless access. How did we ever survive not being able to check email while getting our grande latte at our favorite Internet cafe?

Should you be thinking about deploying 802.11n soon? Sure, but in a small, test environment.

Wireless is obviously here to stay and its latest iteration improves on a good thing. But, does it improve enough? Is it worth trying to move forward with the latest and greatest in wireless technology, 802.11n?

Let's look at what 802.11n gets you. Its biggest claim to fame is the fact that it supports throughputs of 300Mbps and distances of up to 300 feet. However, real life throughputs and distances will be smaller, just like they are with 802.11a/b/g. Even so, testing has found 802.11n throughput to be at least 6 times greater and distances 3 times greater than 802.11a/b/g networks.

That begs the question: what can you expect from a default 802.11n experience? In testing, 802.11n showed typical throughputs in the 120-130Mbps range, although some had connections approaching the 300Mbps level, faster than typical 100Mbps network connections today. This allows you to run voice, data, and video over wireless connections.

Before you start complaining that 802.11n solutions advertise 300Mbps but only deliver 130Mbps, compare the throughput of today's wireless environments. 802.11b promised 10Mbps and typically only gives you 5Mbps. 802.11g boasted its 54Mbps speed, but really only delivers around 20Mbps. So, 802.11n isn't that far off.

Furthermore to approach 300Mbps, access points and the network cards require channel bonding be enabled (it is disabled by default). This changes the width of the Wi-Fi channel. Single channel mode runs at 20 MHz, while channel bonding runs at 40 MHz. The problem with channel bonding is that not every device supports it, and it is also very prone to other 802.11n device interference. If another 802.11n device is detected, the majority of 802.11n devices will fall back to single channel mode.

With all this "wire-free 802.11n goodness" available, why shouldn't you just run out and implement it right now? Better speed, better range, wired speeds with wireless convenience, what more could you ask for? Well, as with so many things in life, with the good there is some bad:

- The 802.11n standard has not been ratified and it probably won't be until mid-2009. This means that all these first generation solutions won't necessarily play nice with the next generation. Early adopters should remember "Caveat Emptor".
- 802.11n solutions aren't cheap. Current radios run about twice the cost of 802.11a/b/g solutions. The cost of radios will go down over time as more people purchase these devices, but early adopters will have to "pay to play".
- 802.11n solutions don't necessarily work all that well with existing 802.11a/b/g implementations.
- WLAN architecture may need to be updated as well. Having wireless clients connecting in at throughputs of 130Mbps instead of 20Mbps means that your edge switches need to handle the increased load as well.

Some environments are obvious candidates for early adopters. There are already some hospitals and universities deploying this technology to make up for the shortcomings of 802.11a/b/g devices. However, most places should probably take a wait and see attitude.

So, is 802.11n a cool new product? Definitely! Should you be thinking about deploying 802.11n soon? Sure, but in a small, test environment. It is probably not wise to look at an enterprise-wide implementation without first seriously considering the cost and implementation hurdles and deciding if the benefits outweigh the risks. In answer to this articles title, "a little bit now, certainly later, and never say never!"



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See www.cd.com for more information.

Monitors: When is Big Too Big?

By David Tappan

Have you ever had any of these experiences?

- You need to do a large amount of copying and pasting from one application to another. You find yourself incessantly switching back and forth between the two applications.
- You need to follow some instructions for configuring a computer or setting up an application, so you download and view the instructions on your computer monitor. After a while, you get sick of switching back and forth, so you print the entire manual.
- You are working with a large spreadsheet and need to compare and synthesize information across dozens of different rows. You find yourself tweaking the magnification in Excel to strike that elusive ideal balance between maximizing the displayed content, and maintaining readability.

If these situations sound familiar, you probably could benefit from a larger monitor. A study at the University of Utah found an increase in productivity of about 52% when users of a single 18-inch monitor were compared with users of a single 24-inch monitor, and 44% when compared with users of two 20-inch monitors.

The same study does indicate that there may be an upper limit to these gains—productivity dropped off again when monitors got larger than 26 inches. However, the study did not measure the impact of adjustments to viewing distance as monitors got larger, so it's possible that the benefits would return if these larger monitors were simply placed farther away.

The Geometry of Monitors

When comparing the payoff for investing in larger monitors, it's important to take into account the fact that screen area increases geometrically with linear screen dimensions. For example, that 24-inch screen is 33% larger on the diagonal than the 18-inch model, but has 85% more screen real estate!



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See www.cdh.com for more information.

Landscape or Portrait Mode?

When evaluating screen size, it's important to think about how the aspect ratio and orientation of the monitor aligns with your work style. Display aspect ratios today typically range from 1.25:1 to 1.6:1. With the more elongated "letterbox" formats, the best screen orientation depends on what you spend your time doing:

- If you are often comparing or cutting and pasting between documents, it's probably best to stick with the traditional landscape mode, since this allows two documents in portrait mode to be nicely laid out side-by-side.
- If you mostly browse the internet, read or write documents, or work with large spreadsheets, many people feel that portrait mode gives a more natural reading experience and a more efficient use of screen real estate.

The Laptop Factor

For desktops, it seems pretty clear that most would benefit from a significantly larger monitor than they currently have. But what about laptop users? Shipments of laptops surpassed desktops for the first time in the third quarter of 2008, but most of the above guidance just doesn't apply to them.

- The size of the screen is more restricted by portability requirements than visibility preferences.
- Two monitors is not an option, at least while traveling.
- Viewing distance for laptops is generally about two-thirds what is typical for desktops.

With laptops, therefore, the decision point from a viewing preference perspective is usually not size, but resolution. Laptop displays, like all LCDs, should always be set at their maximum, or native, resolution. But many users, particularly as they get older, find that on higher resolutions, text is indecipherably small. At the typical viewing distance of about 20 inches, most users prefer text to be about the same size as it is on a printed page. But with today's top resolutions of 1920x1200 or greater, the text is about two-thirds that size on the largest laptop screens commonly available. Fortunately, both PCs and Macs support increasing dots per inch (DPI) and switching to larger icons, which makes these current monitor resolutions comfortable for most users. But until OS vendors provide an easy way to freely adjust these settings to any desired level, we're probably already at the maximum comfortable resolution for laptop screens.

Microsoft's President of North America Sales & Marketing on KT-2.0

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