

" Thanks to Zentyal's easy, web based user interface we could just hit the ground running. There was no need for training even we did not have Linux background. We could just get things out there."

Patricia O'Dwyer
IT Support Officer,
Limerick City Council

Limerick City Council successfully migrates to open source email solution with Zentyal

In 2009, when faced with a the high cost associated with the renewal of software licenses, Limerick City Council adopted Zentyal's solution for open source email management.

The challenge

Since the year 2000, the Limerick City Council had used predominantly a Microsoft Windows network, with Active Directory to manage users and policies, Windows Server for file and printer sharing and Microsoft Exchange as mail solution.

However, in 2009 following the buyout from the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement, the IT Department realized that the licensing costs were too high and opted for phased migration to open source solutions.

Besides the obvious interest in license cost savings, the IT Department also wanted to move from one single provider to an environment where it could negotiate with multiple suppliers and have different purchasing options. The phased migration process started in 2009 with a migration from Microsoft Office, first to OpenOffice and later to LibreOffice. As a natural step, in the next phase the IT Department wanted to migrate their email from Microsoft Outlook to an open source solution that would be at least as good as Outlook, offering email, together with calendars, contacts and tasks.

However, choosing an open source email solution that would integrate with an existing Microsoft infrastructure and allow seamless migration was not easy. When looking at the solutions available, the IT Department found Zentyal and decided it was the best solution for their needs, as it integrated all the necessary functionality -from Active Directory synchronization to LDAP, Postfix and Zarafa as mail stack, to Samba as file and printer sharing, all in one single solution.

The solution

Although the migration itself was challenging enough, especially considering that these were critical systems and no disruption was allowed, the change management needed to be handled carefully in order to avoid rejection from the users.

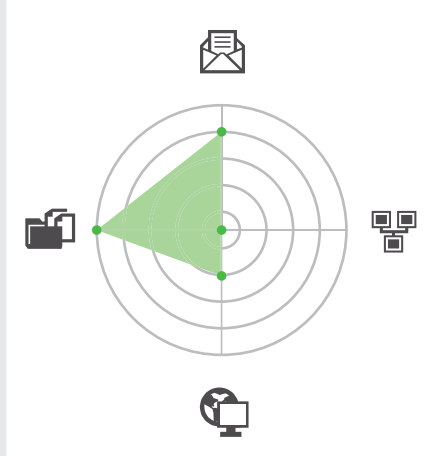
On one hand, system administrators, used to Windows environments, needed to feel at ease with the new systems and be productive from day one. On the other hand, the Outlook replacement needed to provide a similar set of features and a similar user interface to ease transition. Moreover, the migration needed to be accomplished in several steps, allowing for the migration of small teams while keeping the rest working within the existing environments.

The first two challenges, those related with the familiarity of the user interface for both system administrators and email users, were easily overcome thanks to the very nature of Zentyal and Zarafa respectively. Zentyal, conceived as an easy-to-use, intuitive and fully-integrated system, does not require any special training from experienced system administrators, even if they have no Linux background.

Zarafa, on the other hand, was conceived as a web- based replacement for Outlook and thus the migration is a straightforward process.

In order to allow for a step-by-step migration, both Exchange and Zarafa servers were kept running for a while under the same domain with Zentyal delivering mail to both. This way, only users in teams or departments that had been migrated were working with Zarafa, while the rest still used their old Exchange server.

Technical specifications



Communication server



Office server



Network



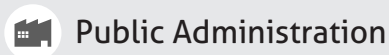
Gateway & UTM



Users



Sector



Technical service



This allowed to minimize the risks and give the necessary time to gain expertise with the new system. Besides, Zentyal was instrumental in developing the integration mechanisms between the Exchange Global Address List (GAL) and Zarafa.

Finally, given the e-mail is a critical service, the new environment was deployed in high availability over two nodes, providing a much more stable and resilient system that the previous proprietary-based technology. This way, if the active node fails, the passive node replaces it without users noticing it. At the moment the email migration is fully completed and currently the IT Department is deploying additional Zentyal-based services like file and printer sharing and testing HTTP proxy.

About Limerick City Council

The city of Limerick is located in the mid-west Ireland and it is Ireland's third largest city, with about 110,000 citizens living in the greater Limerick area. The Limerick City Council has a staff of approximately 450 people that work on six different locations, and it is responsible of many public services including roads, water, planning, environment, finance, social housing, fire station, emergency control center and arts & culture. The Limerick City Council started their migration to opensource IT in 2009 and today they are leaders of the opensource adoption in the Irish local government.

About Zentyal

Zentyal designs and develops IT solutions for small and medium businesses since 2004. The company provides SMBs and their local IT providers all-in-one IT solutions that are easy to use, from the server to the cloud. Zentyal-based solutions allow to reduce and rationalize IT investments, improve the security and minimize system downtime.

