Atos: towards a zero email company.

Changing the way we work through vision and culture, then tools and technology

In 2011, Thierry Breton, CEO of Atos, had a vision: to become a zero email company within 3 years. Rather than remaining the handy ‘Swiss army knife’ of communications, email has become a burden. Managing and ‘doing’ email now take up an enormous number of office hours, among other negatives. Furthermore, the younger generations are used to other ways of communicating. For Atos, it was time to adapt to those new opportunities to communicate and collaborate, improving efficiency.

CHALLENGE

Email overload

E-mail was once considered the solution to everything - communicating, managing teams, archiving... But for some, its advantages are now being overcome by its drawbacks. At Atos, more than 77,000 employees send an average 60 emails per day, resulting in over 1,000,000,000 emails each year. Research showed that more than 50% of Atos employees spent more than 3 hours per day on email. 44% of employees received more than 100 emails per day. The question arose: was email really working for Atos?

“Transformation is more about relationships between people and teams than technology. A Culture change is required before tools can be implemented”
With today’s ‘always-on’ mentality and ‘always connected’ tools like smartphones, many of us check emails all the time, at work and beyond. But only 11% of the younger generation uses email. They have found other ways to connect to each other, using tools freely available on the internet. As they enter the workforce, their usage habits will increasingly affect how companies communicate. In 2011, faced with these facts, Thierry Breton, CEO at Atos, had a vision of the future of Atos as ‘zero email’ – in a timeframe of 3 years.

**SOLUTION**

**Change requires vision**

“Changing the way we work cannot be done overnight, and it requires a vision. We aimed to introduce social media technology concepts for internal communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing. This would logically lead to fewer emails,” explains Peter Vandeput, Practice Manager Information Management & Analytics at Atos.

First, a number of the processes were made email-free. For example, employees no longer receive email notification to approve a purchase order. They must take responsibility for consulting the system, without receiving a notification.

Atos wanted to avoid implementing silo applications, so the Enterprise Social Network (ESN) was built based on Bluekiwi, a company acquired by Atos. Custom development ensured the perfect fit of tool to need. The ESN is the ‘go to’ place, combining Microsoft Lync-based Unified Communications for presence, chat, voice, VoIP and desktop sharing, with a Sharepoint-based enterprise content management system for workflow, compliance and document management.

**LESSONS LEARNT**

**Change requires training**

“Changing the behaviour of 77,000 employees is a huge challenge, requiring ongoing training. Senior management unaccustomed to Facebook, let alone applications, needed to find their way to ESN. Moving away from email required a revolution in how they work. It is an ongoing process, which takes discipline,” says Peter Vandeput.

Today more than 65,000 ESN accounts have been activated, more than 4000 ESN communities have been created, 65+ processes have become email free, there are over3500 zero email ambassadors, 2500 top managers have been trained and efforts like ‘Zero Email Day’ have been implemented. All of this has helped reduce email traffic to an average 46 per day per employee.

Atos shares its expertise and wants to advise companies in the set up of social collaboration solutions (change management, business processes and technical expertise).

Atos SE is an international information technology services company with annual revenue in 2012 of EUR 8.8 billion and 77,100 employees in 52 countries. Serving a global client base, it delivers IT services in 3 domains: Consulting & Technology Services, System Integration and Managed Services & BPO, and Transactional Services through Worldline. With its profound technology expertise and industry knowledge, it works across the following market sectors: Manufacturing, Retail & Services, Public Sector, Healthcare & Transports, Financial Services, Telco, and Media & Utilities.

Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organisations to create their firm of the future. It is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic & Paralympic Games and is quoted on the NYSE Euronext Paris market.

**More Information**

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