Norton Rose Federates Global Law Practice
Using NextPlane FaaS Services

Executive Summary

What happens when you merge multiple law firms together into one global practice? You assume integration and unified communications headaches as part of the merger.

That was the challenge that Norton Rose Group faced when the firm merged with law practices in Australia, Canada, and South Africa. Managing a worldwide law practice requires ongoing strategic communications with partners in offices around the globe. Unified communications technology has the advantages of providing instantaneous text, voice, and video connections, but when you are bringing together established law firms each with its own IT infrastructure, the unified communications strategy can become a Tower of Babel. How do your integrate disparate, established UC platforms into a single federation infrastructure without having to rip-and-replace existing UC systems?

For Norton Rose, NextPlane had the answer. By adopting NextPlane's cloud-based federation service, the expanding global law firm could connect with unified communications systems from newly acquired offices without forcing remote locations to adopt to the same UC platform. And since NextPlane's Federation as a Service (FaaS) is cloud-based, adding new UC platforms was fast, easy, and trouble-free.

Overview

The London-based law firm Norton Rose LLP has long been known for its financial institutions practice. The law firm had been expanding with offices throughout Europe for the last two decades and hit a global resurgence in 2009 with the announcement that it would combine with Deacons, one of Australia's largest law firms. Since establishing Norton Rose Australia, the practice has expanded further by merging with Ogilvy Renault in Canada and Deneys Reitz in South Africa, now Norton Rose Canada LLP and Norton Rose South Africa. Today, the combined Norton Rose Group ranks among the top 10 law firms by head count, with more than 2,500 lawyers on staff in 38 offices around the world and gross revenues of more than $1 billion annually.

One of the challenges of running a global law practice is maintaining communications. With 38 offices in multiple time zones, real-time collaboration is a real challenge. The practice wanted to find a way to consolidate its unified communications strategy, creating a common platform that would support presence and enable immediate communications between offices and partners. In addition, every time

they brought a new firm or affiliate partner into the group, Norton Rose had to find a way to accommodate each legacy UC system as part of their growing infrastructure.

After doing some market research and investigating alternative technical solutions, Norton Rose selected NextPlane as its federation solution partner. NextPlane offered a number of advantages, including the ability to federate in a way that delivered all of the necessary unified communications functionality across disparate UC platforms, including presence, IM, voice, and video. And as a cloud-based solution, NextPlane service offered more flexibility, scalability, and takes almost no time to activate.

NextPlane Delivers Fast Federation Service

What precipitated Norton Rose's immediate need for a federation solution was the merger with the Australian law firm Deacons. With Norton Rose headquarters in London and Deacons headquartered in Australia, the partners needed a federation approach capable of providing presence so they could determine who was available across a 19-hour time difference. Norton Rose also wanted a means to consolidate its unified communications strategy, bringing together real-time communications under a common Web domain, nortonrose.com, without forcing users to migrate to a new platform.

When the firm announced the merger with Deacons, Norton Rose had been running a UC pilot program using WebEx Connect. Deacons, on the other hand, had an established IT infrastructure built on Microsoft OCS. Bringing the newly merged Deacons team into the WebEx Connect pilot would require running two UC platforms, and since Norton Rose was using WebEx Connect as a cloud-based solution, adding Microsoft OCS to the London corporate IT infrastructure would be cost-prohibitive and disruptive.

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>
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> *Innovation Analyst*
> *Norton Rose Group*

That's when Norton Rose turned to NextPlane.

According to Jason Berwick, Innovation Analyst for Norton Rose Group, "We discovered NextPlane on Monday and had a federated UC infrastructure in place on the following Friday. We were able to federate WebEx Connect and Microsoft OCS as disparate systems and get all the functionality we needed, including presence and IM and support for multi-user chat."

NextPlane's Federation Cloud Services consolidates multiple UC platforms into a single infrastructure. It can federate users on Microsoft Lync 2010, OCS 2007 R2, OCS 2007 R1, & LCS 2005 environments

seamlessly and securely with colleagues on IBM Sametime, Cisco CUPS, WebEx Connect and Jabber XCP, Jive OpenFire, and Google Apps.

Seamless, Simple, and Extensible

For Norton Rose, integration was as simple as making a few simple DNS changes to provide full UC integration. There was no need to change domains or address other integration issues. With a few simple DNS changes, the NextPlane Federation Cloud Service was able to federate the Microsoft OCS systems in Australia with WebEx Connect in the United Kingdom as if the services were native to one common platform. According to Berwick, the transition was smooth, without any disruption in service, and they were able to consolidate addresses under the Norton Rose domain.

"It was totally seamless," Berwick said, "as if it were one system. There was minimal effort to set up and no maintenance required. In fact, after we got the system up and running we have had no reason to call NextPlane for support."

And as Norton Rose continues to grow, they have added new office locations in Canada, South Africa, and elsewhere to the same infrastructure without incident. Now all Norton Rose offices have the same UC capabilities, including presence and IM, all running through the NextPlane Federation Cloud Service. The only administration that Berwick's team is required to do is to monitor bandwidth usage at the enterprise firewall so streaming video and other bandwidth-intensive services don't overwhelm the network.

An added bonus of the cloud-based federation that has been particularly valuable to this global law practice is the ability to access the service anytime, anywhere. Partners can connect with their peers from home in the evening or early morning using almost any web-connected device, such as a PC, iPad, or iPhone, which simplifies communications across time zones. And NextPlane support multi-user chat between UC platforms for ad hoc conference sessions.
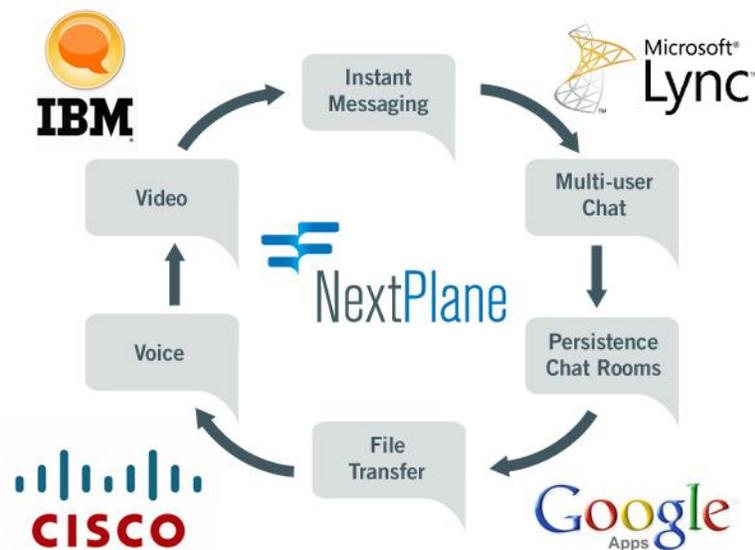
"Our requirements for this federation project were ease of installation, speedy deployment, and flexibility, and we got all that with NextPlane," said Berwick. "We now have a quick and easy process for integrating UC with clients or any other 3rd party, and with NextPlane we know we can establish links quickly so the partners can talk to their counterparts right away."

About Norton Rose

Norton Rose Group is a leading international legal practice offering a full business law service to many of the world's pre-eminent financial institutions and corporations with offices in Europe, Asia, Australia, Canada, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Central Asia. The firm works in a variety of client industries and share knowledge across both business sectors and borders. Practices specialties encompass energy, mining and commodities, transport, technology and pharmaceuticals and life sciences.

The firm has more than 2,900 lawyers operating from office locations in Abu Dhabi, Almaty, Amsterdam, Athens, Bahrain, Bangkok, Beijing, Bogotá, Brisbane, Brussels, Calgary, Canberra, Cape Town, Caracas, Casablanca, Dubai, Durban, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, London, Melbourne, Milan, Montréal, Moscow, Munich, Ottawa, Paris, Perth, Piraeus, Prague, Québec, Rome, Shanghai, Singapore, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto and Warsaw; and from associate offices in Dar es Salaam, Ho Chi Minh City and Jakarta.

About NextPlane

NextPlane offers enterprise-class Federation as a Service (FaaS) solutions for unified communications (UC) platforms, seamlessly federating Microsoft Lync 2010, OCS 2007 R2, OCS 2007 and LCS 2005, IBM Sametime, Cisco Jabber XCP, Cisco Unified Presence Server 8.x, Cisco WebEx Connect, Jive OpenFire, and Google Apps. Using the NextPlane Federation Cloud service, organizations can connect users from different companies regardless of underlying UC platforms - with shared presence, instant messaging, multi-user chat, voice, video, and other features – as if they are on the same platform.

NextPlane offers an ideal solution for companies migrating from one UC platform to another, or to integrate different legacy platforms following a company merger or a new contract or partnership. NextPlane even uniquely supports 'domain sharing', allowing two or more UC platforms to federate internally using the same domain name.

For more information please visit www.nextplane.net, or contact sales at sales@nextplane.net.

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