



**Microsoft Customer Solution**

**Case study**

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**Matthew Coates**

*IT Director  
Niteo Partners, Inc.*



**Delivering Flexible, Highly Available, and Highly Reliable Messaging Services at the Right Price**

**D**eploying and supporting a feature-rich, collaborative, “big business” messaging solution internally can be a prohibitively expensive proposition. But USA.NET, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for Hosting and Application Services, provides companies with a solution that overcomes this problem: USA.NET provides a completely outsourced messaging service based on the Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange. With no internal messaging infrastructure to maintain or administer, USA.NET customers lower their total cost of ownership and realize annual savings of between 30 and 80 percent. And with USA.NET’s service level agreements promising availability 99.9 percent of the time, many of these same companies find that their messaging services are better—and more flexible—than ever.

CUSTOMER PROFILE	BUSINESS SITUATION	SOLUTION	BENEFITS
<p>USA.NET operates one of the largest hosted infrastructures dedicated to world-class enterprise messaging solutions delivered with industry-leading availability levels. The company provides an end-to-end solution for more than 5,000 business clients—from assessment and migration to hosting, enhanced services, and complete customer service.</p>	<p>Properly maintaining a flexible, secure messaging infrastructure can be an expensive proposition when companies do it on their own. Between hardware, software, and support costs, companies can spend tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars each year—and still not gain the reliability, availability, and flexibility they want.</p>	<p>USA.NET offers outsourced messaging services based on the Microsoft® Solution for High Volume Exchange. With three tiers of messaging service, USA.NET can provide business customers with the agile messaging services they need at a per-seat price that is far more cost-effective than they could get internally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customers can save tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars in hardware, software, and support costs</li> <li>▪ USA.NET provides a highly flexible, scalable messaging infrastructure to suit a customer’s needs</li> <li>▪ With Microsoft Exchange, USA.NET can offer service level agreements (SLAs) of 99.9 percent</li> </ul>

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**Matthew Coates**  
IT Director  
Niteo Partners, Inc.

## Situation

In the heyday of the late 1990s, Boston-based Niteo Partners, Inc. was growing at a rate that sometimes topped 10 percent a month. As an information technology (IT) consulting firm with clients around the country, Niteo had personnel on the road who relied heavily on a Microsoft® Exchange 5.5–based messaging infrastructure to communicate with clients and with one another.

Maintaining this messaging infrastructure was putting a heavy burden on Niteo. The company had 8 to 10 messaging-related servers to manage and maintain just for the 500 consultants working from the Boston office. It had additional systems to support in its New York and San Francisco offices. These systems required the ongoing attention of several well-paid system administrators.

The hardware environment posed its own cost burdens. To ensure security, redundancy, and data integrity, Niteo’s messaging team had to maintain backup Exchange servers, message storage systems, and network circuits. These backup systems were rarely used, but Niteo’s IT team understood that they needed to be in place in case they ever were needed.

“There were a lot of costs to maintain this messaging environment that you just don’t see at first glance,” says Matthew Coates, IT Director for Niteo Partners. “When we did a thorough analysis though, we discovered that it was far more expensive to maintain this messaging infrastructure than we’d originally thought.”

As the dynamics of the business environment changed with the demise of the dot-com bubble, Coates knew that Niteo needed to change too. “We had just been bought by NEC Computers and, given the market environment, we were trying to become a much leaner company,” says

Coates. “We wanted to be as flexible and as agile as possible.”

This need for greater flexibility and agility, to say nothing of the need to manage costs more effectively, prompted Coates to reconsider the messaging infrastructure at Niteo. That reconsideration then prompted him to call on USA.NET, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for Hosting and Application Services that offers outsourced business messaging services based on the Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange.

## Solution

USA.NET provides hosted messaging services to Niteo and more than 5,000 other businesses. Built on clustered server hardware from Hewlett-Packard (HP), network hardware from Cisco Systems, a storage solution from EMC, load balancing systems from F5, firewall systems from Check Point and Microsoft, and a BlackBerry Enterprise Server, USA.NET’s implementation of the Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange provides customers with a wide range of messaging services—from POP3 and Web-based e-mail services to calendaring, contact lists, and public folder services. It supports hardware and software-based virtual private network connections, as well as secure Web and dial-up access.

Customers can make use of the full feature set of the Microsoft Outlook® messaging and collaboration client when working with USA.NET’s Exchange-based solution; they can also use Outlook Web Access to interact with the messaging system through a Web browser. With the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, USA.NET customers can even send and receive mail remotely through use of BlackBerry wireless devices.

From a software standpoint, USA.NET’s implementation of the Microsoft Solution

**Microsoft®**

for High Volume Exchange relies on the Microsoft Windows Server™ operating system with Internet Information Services and Active Directory® directory service, plus Exchange Server Enterprise Edition. It also makes use of Microsoft SQL Server™, Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration Server, Brightmail Anti-Spam, Trend Micro virus scanning software, Messageware Plus Pack, the Microsoft .NET-based abrideanProvisor user provisioning solution, and a collection of best-of-breed management tools from Microsoft, NetIQ, and HP.

“The hosted Exchange solution from USA.NET provided a way for us to gain the flexibility and agility we wanted,” says Niteo’s Coates. “We retained all the strengths of Microsoft Exchange, but we didn’t have to manage it and we didn’t have to administer it. And for what we pay on a per-seat basis, there’s a lot of value there.”

## Benefits

Organizations working with USA.NET and its Exchange-based messaging services are finding that they can reduce their messaging costs and administrative overhead considerably—yet without giving up any of the functionality or flexibility that is critical. Indeed, many organizations find that relying on USA.NET for messaging provides a greater degree of flexibility than they had in the past.

### Dramatically Lower Costs

Because USA.NET can take advantage of Microsoft’s service provider licensing terms, it can charge its customers on a per-user basis. Because of the economies of scale, USA.NET can spread the cost of hardware and support across many customers, which effectively lowers the per-user cost of delivering a best-of-breed messaging service to a price point that is

far lower than most customers could achieve on their own.

“When you consider the cost of having an e-mail administrator, the hardware platforms you need to own and maintain, software licensing costs, backup costs, and the other network issues that need to be considered when you’re hosting an application yourself and you’re trying to maintain a 99.9 percent service level agreement, it’s very expensive,” says Niteo’s Coates. “By outsourcing our messaging to USA.NET, I think we’ve saved roughly \$200,000 per year.”

Amy Rutt, President of IT infrastructure support firm Ciracom, another USA.NET messaging client, agrees. “Microsoft has done a great job with Exchange and I love the product,” she says, “but I’ve got fewer than 100 people working in my company and I’ve got to look at my return on investment. What it comes down to is this: When I’ve got people who are able to bill their time working with clients versus sitting in the office and working on the Exchange server, does it really make sense for us to be doing this in-house? It makes more sense to outsource, so we turned to USA.NET.”

Ciracom’s decision to outsource its messaging infrastructure to USA.NET has saved the company at least \$25,000 to \$30,000 each year in expenses related to hardware, software, and non-billable hours.

### Greater Reliability and Flexibility

Maintaining a messaging infrastructure for high availability and high reliability is not always simple—particularly as the volume of spam and malicious messages increases. Nor is it easy for individuals spending only part of their time administering a messaging infrastructure to stay on top of the changing dynamics and changing needs of the organization. Both Niteo’s Coates and Ciracom’s Rutt have noticed improvements in availability, reliability, and flexibility

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since outsourcing their messaging infrastructures to USA.NET, which provides a 99.9 percent availability SLA to all the tiers of service supported by its hosted Exchange solution.

Such improvements are not entirely surprising. With a team of more than 60 dedicated messaging professionals working around the clock, day in and day out—including dedicated network support personnel and specialists with certifications from Microsoft, HP, Cisco, EMC, and other vendors—USA.NET provides a level of expertise that no small company could easily or cost-effectively capture on its own. “The fact is, USA.NET is up 24/7,” says Ciracom’s Rutt. “It just works.”

### All the Control with None of the Heavy Lifting

Some IT managers might be concerned about losing control over their mail accounts if they were to outsource their mail infrastructure, but USA.NET’s use of a Web-based administration tool from Abridgean, Inc. has eliminated those concerns. The abrideanProvisor tool not only makes it easy for USA.NET technicians to create domains for customers such as Niteo, but it also provides a privilege-restricted Web interface that enables designated customer e-mail administrators to add, change, and delete user accounts as they see fit. USA.NET’s customers can effectively manage their own users and accounts for most day-to-day tasks.

At the same time, a customer’s privileges do not extend beyond its own domain so these e-mail administrators cannot manage user accounts belonging to any other USA.NET customer. With the security built into the Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange, individual customers of USA.NET are logically isolated within the system and have no way to see or access the accounts of other USA.NET customers.

“USA.NET gives us the tools that enable us to be very agile when we want to add or remove users,” says Niteo’s Coates. “But we don’t have to worry about the details of system management. Scalability, for example, is just not our problem anymore. We don’t need to think about migrating, upgrading, anything like that—and that really takes a big chunk off our plates.”

### Scalability for Long-Term Growth

The Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange provides USA.NET customers with a solution that enables them to maintain a right-sized messaging infrastructure. USA.NET offers different tiers of messaging solutions built around the same infrastructure, so customers can provide larger mailboxes and greater messaging functionality to certain individuals, and smaller mailboxes and more limited functionality to others who may not need as many features. They can add and remove users quickly and easily through the Provisor interface, and their monthly charges reflect only the number of seats they have provisioned. They can upsize or downsize quickly, and the Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange remains the right-sized solution to meet their needs.

The Microsoft Solution for High Volume Exchange delivers the same fundamental benefit to USA.NET itself. The configuration of the solution makes it easy to scale the solution to accommodate both sudden and planned increases in account and mail volume. USA.NET can quickly add new systems to support front-end or back-end processing requirements; it can add storage to support increased message store requirements; it can even add new services to the solution to meet evolving customer demands or offer advantageous new technologies.

“USA.NET has committed to supporting us no matter what kind of demand we have,” says Niteo’s Coates. “It’s really nice to know that we won’t have to worry about

whether the server we just bought is going to be at capacity in three months.”

Microsoft Exchange Server provides rock-solid messaging and collaboration 24 hours a day, seven days a week—with low total cost of ownership. Designed with mission-critical performance in mind, Exchange enables access to the people and information you want, anytime and from anywhere. Combining industry-leading reliability and scalability with unmatched ease of management, Exchange seamlessly integrates with the Microsoft Windows® operating system and takes advantage of the full power of the Windows Active Directory directory service and security features. With Exchange, businesses can further leverage their messaging infrastructure with value-added collaborative solutions. Exchange is part of the Microsoft Windows Server System™ for building, deploying, and managing next-generation integrated Web experiences.

For more information about Microsoft Exchange Server, go to:  
<http://microsoft.com/exchange/>

## Software and Services

### Microsoft® Windows Server System™

- Windows Server™
- Exchange Server Enterprise Edition
- Internet Security and Acceleration Server
- SQL Server™

### Hardware

Hewlett-Packard servers  
Cisco Systems routers  
Check Point firewalls  
F5 load balancers  
EMC mirrored mass storage  
BlackBerry Enterprise Server

### Partners

Microsoft, Trend Micro, Brightmail,  
Hewlett-Packard, EMC,  
Abridean, and others

## For More Information

For more information about Microsoft products and services, call the Microsoft Sales Information Center at (800) 426-9400. In Canada, call the Microsoft Canada Information Centre at (877) 568-2495. Customers who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can reach Microsoft text telephone (TTY/TDD) services at (800) 892-5234 in the United States or (905) 568-9641 in Canada. Outside the 50 United States and Canada, please contact your local Microsoft subsidiary. To access information using the World Wide Web, go to:  
<http://www.microsoft.com/>

For more information about USA.NET products and services, call (800) 653-0179 or visit the Web site at:  
<http://www.usa.net/>

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