

Case Study: Fund Administration Firm's CRM

Overview

A global fund administration firm's partners and principals have expertise managing billion-dollar global investment organizations. The firm has created many of the software solutions utilized by the largest and most notable hedge funds. The firm's experience reflects managing hedge fund administration and middle- and backoffice outsourcing for more than 50 investment partnerships with nearly \$10 billion under administration. The firm maintains offices in Chicago, New York City, the Cayman Islands and Greenwich, CT.

Challenge

The firm had developed its own customer relationship management (CRM) system. The system was used occasionally throughout the workday; it did not typically run on end users' desktops all day long. Although the system was feature-rich and fulfilled the firm's CRM needs, it afforded no way to synchronize pre-existing contacts or other data off-line. The simplest of tasks — data entry, data look-up and ad hoc data capture — meant launching the entire CRM system. The problem frustrated the firm's end users. The firm's developers sought to integrate their CRM system with Microsoft® Outlook®, an application the firm's end-users typically run all day long, and thereby overcome the challenge of off-line ad hoc data entry. The application integration problem was a problem in itself and the fund administration firm came to Onward Technologies for help.

Requirements

The firm desired a system that fully supported all of the information capture and manipulation functions performed by its internally developed CRM system. In addition, the firm needed a means of synchronizing e-mail messages, contact information, contact notes and calendar appointments — as well as each user's personal Outlook data — with the CRM system. Changes made locally on users' desktops needed to be reflected in the CRM and vice-versa. Since the firm's employees and clients typically run Outlook all day long, the firm hoped that synchronizing its CRM application with Outlook would solve its problems.

Problem with Out-of-the-Box Software

While off-the-shelf synchronization products do exist, they are developed for commercial applications and devices. The firm's CRM system was developed in-house and an out-of-the-box application would not address the firm's needs. The firm's custom problem required a custom solution.

Onward's Solution

Onward Technologies utilized the latest in Microsoft .NET Web services technology to develop a software solution to the firm's synchronization problems. Our solution provided complete two-way synchronization between enduser desktops and the firm's CRM system. Once the software was installed, users were instructed to establish an Internet connection and synchronize their information. If an Internet connection was not available, data could be collected off-line and synchronized when the connection became available. Figure 1 represents the high-level solution Onward delivered to the fund administration firm. Web services are used to communicate between the software installed on end-users' desktops and the firm's internally developed CRM system. E-mail messages, notes, calendar appointments and contacts are captured from Outlook and synchronized at regular intervals (or when the user explicitly requests synchronization) — as long as an Internet connection is available. Data being transmitted over the Internet are encrypted to ensure security and integrity. Transmission is conducted over a highly secure channel using the latest communication technologies

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Onward's applications are developed using the latest technologies, as highlighted in figure 1. Synchronizing data requires only an Internet connection and a click of a button, as shown in figure 2.

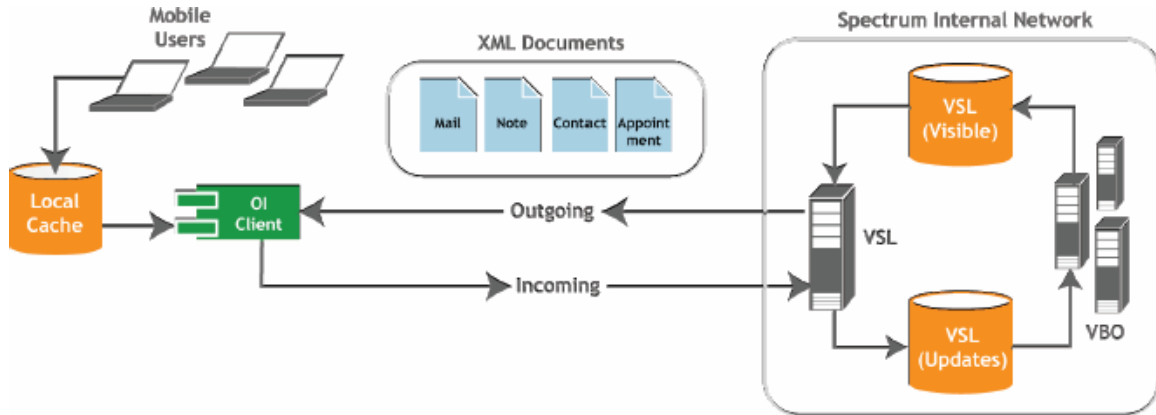


Figure 1. Onward used the latest Microsoft .NET technology to solve the firm's challenge.

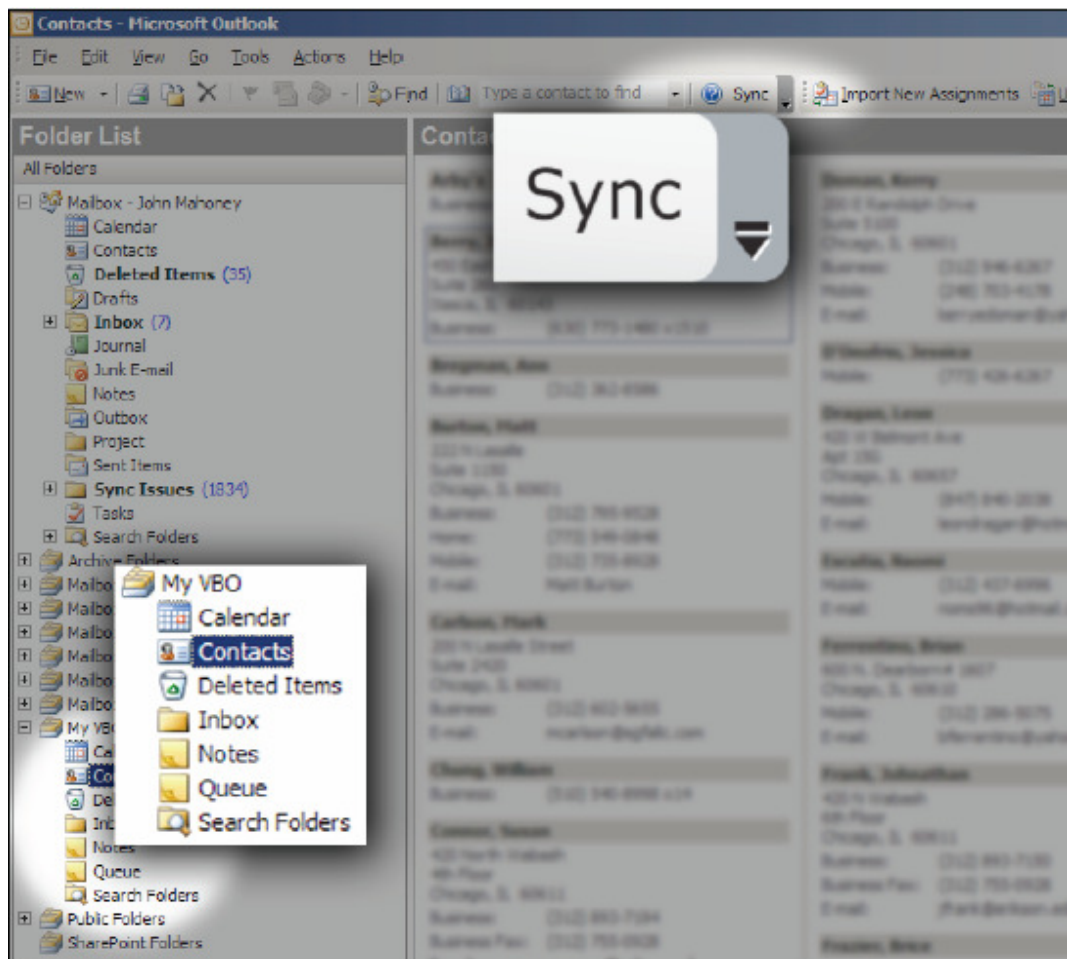


Figure 2. Onward's solution provides one-button synchronization with My VBO.