

# Collaboration

## **Background**

**Propeller Media (PM)** is an international public relations and design agency with offices in North America and the United Kingdom. Although their portfolio of clients is fairly robust and varied they have developed a specific set of expertise as it relates to technical startups. With their ability to cater to their client's needs coupled with their ability to think out of the box, PM's client roster is growing by leaps and bounds. This has presented them with the enviable problem of growth.

An expanding client roster requires additional in-house resources. These resources are currently located in New York City, San Francisco and London. The London location is comprised of a small office with four individuals whose primary role is web development. The San Francisco location is comprised of ten individuals with varying capabilities. Finally, the New York location is considered corporate headquarters employing ten professionals with various capabilities.

PM's founders built a growth strategy into their business plan however they are cautious to execute this growth strategy in the current economic climate. This has prompted the agency to leverage a network of partners which include freelancers with various capabilities as well as other agencies with specific skill sets.

In addition to the marketing, advertising and design skills they've acquired, PM is also developing a new skill set; community building. This has proven to be an interesting niche as it aligns their marketing expertise with their technical prowess.

Propeller Media lives up to their name as they are definitely driven by technology and fortified by their client's ideas. Their clients demand the cutting edge, both visually and technically. Although aligning the two has proven challenging, this is their differentiator, or their "secret sauce" as they put it.

## **IT Situation**

Developing and embedding rich media is not only visually appealing but necessary in contemporary webpages. To accommodate this need, Propeller Media has engineered an expansive primary storage footprint of ten terabytes. This primary storage footprint is located in NY while the primary components of the web development team are located in the UK and the audio and video editors are located in San Francisco.

The technical staff of PM is separated into two groups; client focused and organisation focused. As the name implies the client focused group works on billable projects while the role of organisation focused

technical staff is solely organisational support. Their most recent project was deploying WAN optimisation technology to decrease network latency while improving overall connection speeds between the three locations. In addition PM has recently deployed Novell Open Enterprise Server to subsidize their investment in tiered storage.

Email and Instant Messaging take center stage as the primary communication platform for many organisations and PM is no different. Currently, their mail platform is Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 which also means they use Active Directory as their primary means of authentication.

The desktop environment is a heterogeneous mix of Windows XP and Vista, Apple, Ubuntu Linux and SuSE Linux Enterprise Desktop machines. Securing, patching and provisioning applications in this environment have been difficult for a number of reasons. Just two of the many reasons are that; 1 - they simply haven't made an investment in a centralized management platform because of the focus placed on storage management and 2 - they've had a negative experience with solutions that claim to be able to manage their environment. The most recent solution they have since deployed and removed was Cisco Network Admission Control (NAC).

## The Challenge

The health of Propeller Media's storage footprint is an ongoing priority, however the company has become more comfortable with the recent OES implementation. This has enabled the organisational focused technical team the opportunity to put their attention towards additional projects. One such project centers on enhancing inter and intra organisational communication. The extensive use of partners has been a catalyst for this initiative.

PM has narrowed their list of potential TCA candidates to Microsoft Sharepoint, Clearspace 2.0 and Zimbra. The short list of capabilities they require in a solution is:

- Work seamlessly in a heterogeneous computing environment
- Low acquisition costs
- High level of user interface customisation
- Alignment with business process
- Low susceptibility to attack

## The Opportunity

**From the information provided, what are the possible opportunities you can discern?**

**Your answer should possess the following elements:**

- Identification of current and future business challenges
- Identification of the technical environment your solution is designed to manage and protect
- A strategy of how to articulate the relevance of your solution to differing computing groups (technical vs business)

**In addition to tailoring your answer to fit the within the aforementioned parameters, personalise your answer as well. You can do this by thinking about how the specific skill sets and partnerships of your organisation will not only solve the issue but also position the organisation to take advantage of future technology trends.**

