

## CASE

■ **Customer:** municipality of Ede ■ **Goal:** modernise e-mail and agenda server ■ **Technology:** Zarafa server on SuSe Linux ■ **Service provider:** Stone IT ■ **Critical aspects:** acceptance by end users ■ **Remarkable:** Exchange administrator refuses retraining course for Linux ■ **ROI:** substantially expanded functionality on budget at 2005 level

Without too much effort, the municipality of Ede switched thousands of employees to the e-mail and agenda server Zarafa at the beginning of June. Finally users received remote access to their e-mail and agenda, at home on a Mac or on the road from any smartphone. "The Exchange administrator refused to take the Linux course and now has a different job."

There is a new trick to receive a hefty discount from Microsoft. Insinuate that you will switch from Exchange to Zarafa and the monopolist immediately reduces its price. That's what consultants at Capgemini experienced earlier this year: "A large customer, with many millions of e-mail users, decided not to switch to Zarafa because Microsoft equalised the price." But Zarafa is more than simply half the price. According to Capgemini consultant Alex van Hout, Zarafa performs many times better than Microsoft Exchange. He proves this with two simulations, built and executed with IBM. The first system, for 4000 simultaneous users, has a reaction speed of 85 milliseconds. Van Hout: "That is incredibly fast." The second system, for 6000 users, presents remarkably lighter hardware demands: "The Zarafa system runs fine on one database, twelve disks and four CPUs. To be able to cope with the same number of users Exchange requires at least 24 databases, 96 disks and 12 hexacore CPUs. Zarafa is years ahead of Exchange." Those who switch to Zarafa are, after all, less dependent on the dominant software manufacturer Microsoft. That was the deciding factor for the municipality of Ede. The supplier independent strategy is propagated with lots of verve by the Director ICT of the municipality, Bart Lindeboom. He was the most important speaker at the Zarafa SummerCamp in Kerkrade on June 30. His pragmatic approach makes Ede one of the appealing references for the Delft software company.

#### Reason

The IT professionals in Ede looked for a modern system for e-mail and agenda for quite some time. The municipality's 1000 civil servants had been working with Exchange 2003 since 2005, but it no longer satisfied all their needs. One of the biggest annoyances was the paltry 20 MB of disk space per user. Civil servants worked around this handicap by setting aside as many e-mails as possible. That resulted in a second limitation: these messages were not accessible from a different computer. That was the most frequent complaint at the offices in Ede. Moreover, Exchange was difficult to reach from other workstations. The number of smart phones that could be issued was limited. The e-mail system only worked together with web browser Safari or Firefox, to the irritation of civil servants that use an Apple computer at home. It was only easy to move e-mail with the Microsoft browser; in all other browsers each email had to be clicked separately. The municipality wanted to



Bart Lindeboom: 'Some of them immediately ordered an iPhone, ready to link up with Zarafa.'

PHOTO: JAN LANKVELD

Independent of place and platform due to switch from Microsoft Exchange to Zarafa

# Ede freed from e-mail annoyances

avoid switching to a more modern version of Exchange, says Lindeboom: "Then you are stuck with that supplier for years." The municipality investigated a cloud approach. For example, Ede studied Google's offerings. Governments are afraid to outsource data and applications to cloud suppliers as long as there are insufficient guarantees with regard to information security and the privacy of citizens and companies. "The cloud is forbidden territory for us", concluded Lindeboom in Kerkrade. The municipality liked the next alternative in the top three, Zarafa. It is nice that it runs on Linux. The municipality has lots of experience with Linux.

That Zarafa is available as open source is of secondary importance, says Lindeboom. He formulated it explicitly: "Ede never selects applications due to their licence. Zarafa simply suits the municipality best when we look at functionality, interoperability and all the costs."

#### Approach

The Exchange administrator viewed things differently. The choice of Zarafa on Linux frightened him, said Lindeboom in his morning speech: "That administrator had a serious problem because he refused the retraining course." It sounded worse than it is. Lindeboom made a subtle distinction

## Hesitation turned into enthusiasm after informative meeting

during lunch. The automator now has an alternative position in Ede's IT team; he is a Microsoft VDI scripts administrator and offers virtual desktops.

Likewise there was a slight panic amongst the users. Lindeboom put things into perspective: "That is completely understandable since it involves a big change in their daily tools". Hesitation turned into enthusiasm when about 100 civil servants attended a lunch meeting at the town hall last March and heard about the new system's unlimited storage capacity. They learned that Zarafa gives them access to all their e-mails and appointments anywhere. "Some of them immediately ordered an iPhone, ready to link up with Zarafa." For the 'super users' (especially secretaries) the IT department organised a special course and they drew up an inventory of potential migration problems in every department of the municipality. They encountered a problem: a few

departments have ingenious e-mail filter rules and they were impossible to transfer automatically.

The IT experts asked everyone to note down the essential filters and warned them that they would have to be reinstalled after the switchover. "In most cases the users did this themselves, but IT experts were on hand in every department to help."

After thorough tests Ede painlessly switched to Zarafa at the beginning of June, said Lindeboom. "We only forgot one detail: the link with the spam filter between the Internet and Zarafa. We quickly discovered the error. In the first minute we processed 28,000 spam e-mails."

#### Result

The civil servants in Ede are happy that they finally have access to e-mail from all kinds of computers and that there is an end to the constant separation of important, useful and less urgent messages. It is important to note that this larger capacity did not result in extra costs. Lindeboom: "The quantity of e-mail data continues to grow. Instead of investing in large and expensive storage systems for Microsoft Exchange, we place the Zarafa archive on slower and therefore cheaper disks. This allows us to cope with the growth in e-mail traffic." A comparison of costs is difficult according to Lindeboom. The switch to Zarafa was executed with the same exploitation budget that was reserved six years ago for Exchange. "That budget was not indexed and that makes Zarafa cheaper. Zarafa delivers much more functionality for the same amount of money. It is faster, offers larger mailboxes, is accessible on all computers and all smartphones, and has a smarter archive system."

Gijs Hillenius

### — Tips Bart Lindeboom —

#### 1 Come have a look

"Zarafa is excellent. Governments that want to have a look are always welcome."

#### 2 Share the knowledge

"Governments should share their knowledge and experience. Take stock of where collaboration is possible and form alliances. Within that network look for more opportunities and learn from other organisations. Collaboration is fun."

#### 3 Supplier independent IT strategy

"It is nice that open source must be involved for tenders. Be sure to look at all the costs and aim for the independence of IT suppliers."

#### 4 Start using open source

"For large municipalities and government organisations it is easier to start using open source software. Some IT experts probably have experience with open source, and the large systems of the Social Department and Civil Affairs have already switched from Unix to Linux. It is time to create critical mass for this type of software."

#### 5 Participate in user groups

"There will be a user group especially for governments that work with Zarafa. In that group we can develop and share new solutions. It costs a bit of time and money, but you will recover those costs."