



WARP CASE STUDY

LONDON CONNECTS: ADVICE BROKERING SERVICE

Introduction:

London Connects, a London-wide agency bringing together local, regional, and central government across the capital, launched its LCWARP (London Connects WARP) in April 2003. It wasn't until February the following year that Matt Smith, the then Project Manager, set up the WARP's Members' Forum, a key part of the WARP's Advice Brokering service. The idea was to establish a set of regular meetings among the London boroughs' IT security officers, where all aspects of information security could be discussed openly and advice interchanged in a secure and trusted environment. This would eventually lead to an increased awareness of information security and a natural tendency to communicate freely in critical moments.

Making a WARP work:

When Matt Smith was contracted as a full-time Project Manager for a period of only 10 weeks by London Connects in April 2003, they weren't aware how critical his role would become. His responsibilities were to set up a WARP 'control centre' for all the London boroughs providing members with a secure environment within which dialogue, help and advice on information security issues could be exchanged. In addition, he would chair the Members' Forums until a chair from the group was found, where main tasks would include finding sponsors, venues, vendors etc. Although attendance was at first low and with few vendors willing to make a commitment, Matt can now count on at least 15 to 16 members per meeting and a waiting list of vendors eager to make contributions.

Matt Smith – LCWARP
Service Manager



Advice Brokering Service:

Following a change in title to Service Manager in 2005 and with a group of 'maturing' WARP members now in tow, Matt realized that the Advice Brokering Service, rather than the Filtered Warnings Application (software), was fundamental to the success of the WARP model in building trust and leading on to successful incident reporting. He, as well as the members, shares the same view, "Advice Brokering has given us a good idea of what's going on out there and broadening our field of vision. In the past, Information

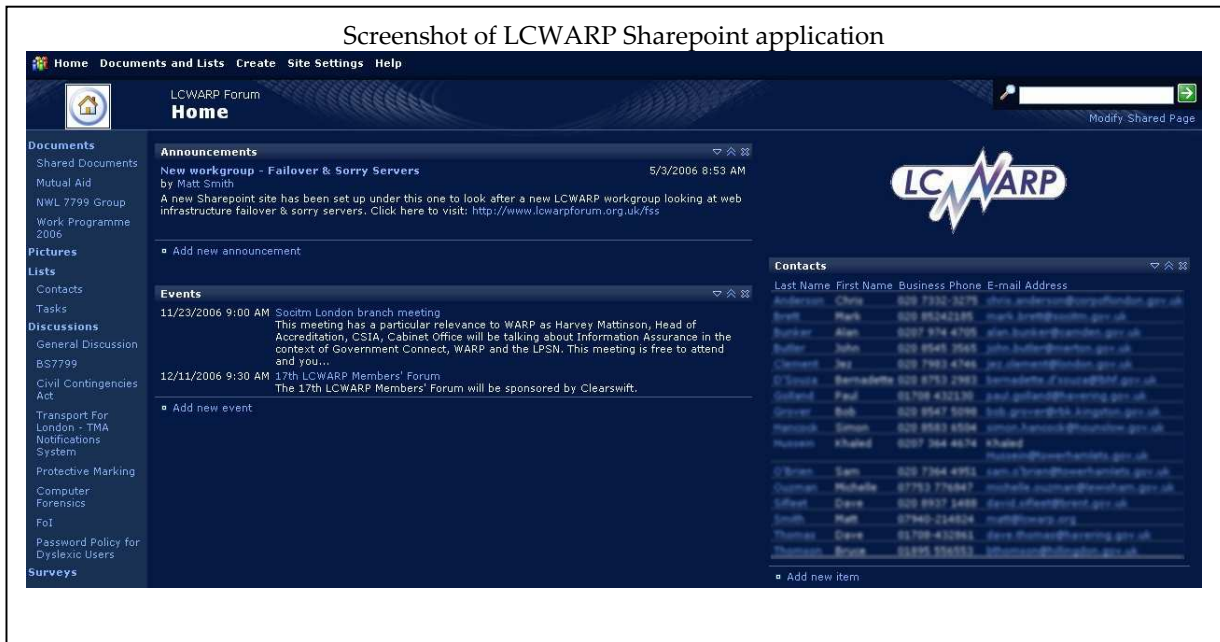
Security has been a very isolated field; being part of a WARP proves that we are not alone." According to the following quotes from different members of the Forum group, Advice Brokering provides:

- Information sharing: "Meeting with your peers means you can resolve your issues and, in addition, get valuable advice";
- Meetings: "Meetings with your peers is an occasion where issues can be resolved in a timely and effective manner";
- Peer networking: "This is invaluable as far as sharing information and real learning is concerned";
- Community focus: "The WARP community provides a resource of different skills, experience and knowledge always at a member's disposal";
- Synergy: "Meeting with the group gives this area of work a real synergy";
- Effective: "The forums are always interesting even though they may take up a whole day";
- Vendors: "The presentations at the forums have always been very useful in clarifying technology issues".

SharePoint (Microsoft):

Matt takes comfort in the fact that members also use and are well-acquainted with Microsoft's SharePoint software that allows WARP members to build collaborative websites. This makes it possible for them to share information and documents easily and reliably. Any user can access a Windows SharePoint Services Web site using a web browser or through the new collaboration features built into Microsoft Office 2003 products such as Word and Excel. "Using this feature means we're all focused on sharing our valuable information and a place where we can post discussion topics," confirms one member.

Screenshot of LCWARP Sharepoint application



Challenges:

Naturally, the project hasn't been without its challenges. The biggest barrier to an effective brokering service is trust. Matt explains: "This was hard at first because trust grows with time. Members meet, discuss and then walk away thinking can I trust them with my sensitive information. It took some time to establish this trust, but once it's there and not abused, the system works well."

"The other challenge is time", Matt says. "Some members just don't make the time to attend these meetings, which is a shame because this is a service available to all London borough members through their annual subscription. But it's been proven that once they come, they return because what they learn at these forums is of huge benefit to them and to others."

Conclusion:

City Hall where many of the meetings take place



As a result of their popularity, the members decided to increase the frequency of these meetings from every eight to every six weeks, with the addition of a new chairman. But it has taken Matt over two years to get to where he is. He explains: "It was a real challenge to get the project started because there was no-one from whom to take over - I started from scratch so it was vital to set myself a list of priorities and get on with the tasks in hand. But once the service gathered momentum and showed positive results,

everything fell into place because I believed in it and so would its audience once they were aware of what it could do for them. As one member puts it succinctly, "In essence, Advice Brokering saves us time, duplication of work and, in addition, gives us free advice – there's nothing much else that can beat that!"