



Dec. 6, 2011

David Vitale, President
Jesse Ruiz, Vice President
Henry Bienen, Member
Dr. Mahalla Hines, Member
Penny Pritzker, Member
Rod Sierra, Member
Andrea Zopp, Member
Chicago Board of Education
125 South Clark Street, 6th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60603

Dear Mr. President, Mr. Vice President and Board Members,

We are writing to express concerns about Chicago Public Schools' plan to implement a Hosted Enterprise Email, Collaboration, Archiving and Implementation Solution, as described by Specification Number 11-250035.

As we understand the situation, there are seven proposals to offer a solution for the school system, including one that would implement Google Apps. Before considering that proposal you should know about Google's track record in attempting to implement a similar "cloud computing" or Software as a Service (SaaS) solution for the City of Los Angeles.

On its Google Apps For Government website the Internet giant cites Los Angeles as a success story. It is not. Rather it has been a saga of a series of missed deadlines, broken promises and an inability to deliver a system that meets security needs two years after the project was started.

The plan to migrate Los Angeles City Government's email to Google Apps was announced with great fanfare in 2009. Thirty thousand city employees were to make the switch to the Google system, which was being implemented by CSC. Executives in the city's Information and Technology Agency (ITA) said the new system would save millions of dollars.

A slick marketing video made in 2009 features both Randi Levin, City of Los Angeles ITA general manager and chief technology officer, and Kevin Crawford, ITA assistant general manager, extolling the supposed benefits of the Google system. But things haven't worked out according to the rosy scenario depicted as a "success story" on the Google Apps for Government website.

In Los Angeles Google has been unable after two years to meet the security requirements of the Los Angeles Police Department. This should not be surprising; the fact is that Google is an advertising company. This is where 96% of its revenue came from in 2010. It's not a computer services company, so the resources it devotes to serving governments and school districts are small and the errors Google will continue to make will be huge.

Google was supposed to provide email service to about 30,000 Los Angeles city employees. Working with CSC, which is implementing the project, Google has managed to put only 17,000 city employees on the system. Despite assurances two years ago when the project was launched, Google still cannot meet the security requirements of the Los Angeles Police Department and other city employees involved in law enforcement. 13,000 employees are unable to move to the Google system.

Google's failures were apparent nearly a year ago when Ms. Levin wrote last December to Google and CSC. She said, "These failures are wholly unacceptable to the City of Los Angeles. CSC and Google have repeatedly committed to meet particular deliverables on specific dates, only to reveal, at the last minute, that the set deliverables/dates will not be met. CSC and Google's behavior goes beyond a mere failure to communicate in a timely manner, and instead, on several occasions, has risen to the level of misrepresentation."

The status of the project is expected to be the subject of a closed-door briefing to City Council this week.

Google not only made misrepresentations to the city, but also continues to make them to potential Google Apps customers by using the inappropriate and deceptive video featuring Ms. Levin and Mr. Walker. We have urged city officials to demand that the Internet giant remove the video from its website so that other potential customers around the country will not be misled.

It is out of that concern that we are writing you. As you consider your alternatives in selecting an email solution, you should know that Los Angeles has not been a success story for Google by any stretch of the imagination.

It has been a series of missed deadlines and failures to meet promises. We urge you to give careful consideration to what has happened here before embarking on any solution in Chicago.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Jamie Court' and the signature on the right is 'John M. Simpson'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jamie Court
President

John M. Simpson
Privacy Project Director.