Email Archiving – an Overview for IT Decision-Makers

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Why Email Archiving? A Summary for IT Managers and System Administrators

Not only is email an important means of digital communication, but it is also a comprehensive and valuable information resource for companies. Managing this resource, however, can be a challenge. As a rule, data sent by email are not usually stored at a separate location, but reside in workers' mailboxes, giving rise to fragmented data silos comprising years of knowledge and expanding on a daily basis. Preserving this knowledge over time so that it can be used efficiently by colleagues can play a crucial role in a company's success. In this white paper, we'll explain why email archiving should be part of any comprehensive IT strategy and what benefits it can deliver for an IT department and the company as a whole.

Challenges in Email Management: Legal, Technical, Financial

Most companies have excellent email servers or groupware solutions for email communication. But these systems were never designed to store and provide large amounts of data over long periods of time, and this can give rise to legal, technical, and financial issues.

Taking Regulatory Compliance Into Account

Depending on the country and industry, processing emails and storing this data over time so that it is permanently available can be subject to different legal and regulatory requirements. Often, industries sending and receiving large volumes of sensitive, personal data by email are subject to stricter regulations. These include the healthcare sector and the financial industry, as well as public authorities and educational institutions.

In the event of a legal dispute (e.g. where emails are being used as evidence) or where data subjects are asserting their rights under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (right of erasure/right to access data, right to restrict processing, etc.), a company's management or legal/compliance team must be in a position to search for and retrieve data from its entire email stock efficiently at all times.

Meeting the Technical Requirements

In order to put this communication resource to effective, productive use, users need to have access to all their emails simply and quickly at all times. Ideally, older emails that have already been deleted from the mailbox – either by accident or in order to free up space in the mailbox – will be accessible, too. Searching for emails should be simple and intuitive, and the same applies to recovering any deleted mails and attachments; ideally, this should be possible without involving your local IT service desk. However, self-service features like these are not normally a feature of an email or groupware solution.

Financial Implications

The time, effort and resources needed to continuously manage performance problems affecting email servers and storage capacities constitute a considerable portion of an IT department's budget. Daily requests by users to retrieve archived emails or recover corrupt, locally stored emails (e.g. in the form of PST files) eat up further resources. Productivity also tends to suffer if users have to spend lots of time browsing through folders for old emails or searching for specific items of information.

The Solution: Email Archiving – An Indispensable Part of Corporate IT Strategy

Due to the increase in email traffic and the tighter regulations seen in many markets in recent years (e.g. the GDPR in the EU and the CCPA in California), we would advise all IT decision-makers to address the issue of email archiving proactively. The option of archiving relevant emails professionally as the cornerstone of a comprehensive email management concept should be a part of every IT strategy. Without an archiving solution in place, email governance policies issued by a company's management will be difficult, if not impossible, for the IT department to implement on its systems. Such directives could include retention policies for specific emails, centralized archiving of distributed emails (e.g. local PST files, emails that exist solely on email clients), and the ability to restore historic emails.

How Does Email Archiving Work?

The primary objective of any email archiving solution is to make sure that email data

remains available and retrievable over time. To do this, the archiving solution stores copies of all emails in a central archive, thus ensuring the availability and security of data over many years.

The email archive supplements an existing email system (which can, of course, continue to be used as before). The administrator configures which emails are to be transferred to the archive and when, and whether the emails, once archived, should be deleted from the mailboxes on the email server. Ideally, the archive will be able to manage very large volumes of data efficiently.

Email Archiving vs. Backups:
Creating Backups Is Not the Same as Email Archiving!

"We already back up the data on our email servers. There's no need to archive the data separately". IT managers who subscribe to this premise are taking a considerable risk, because backups are no substitute for a professional email archive.

Although backups and archiving are both key elements of any safety-conscious business, they pursue different objectives (see table below):

- The primary purpose of a backup is to support the Disaster Recovery (DR) process within the framework of a Business Continuity (BC) concept. Backups protect important data (ideally, including the email archive itself) usually over short or medium time frames so that this information can be restored as required. This guarantees that business-critical systems and data remain available even in an emergency (e.g. system failure or a ransomware attack).

- The aim of archiving, however, is to store emails for many years in a form that is faithful to the original, easy to find, and permanently available. This forms the basis for a professional information management strategy that takes all legal and regulatory requirements into account. Therefore, in addition to backups, email archiving is one of the most important instruments underpinning a company's Business Continuity (BC) policy.

Emails should never simply be deleted. Archiving emails is important so that the information contained in them is available at all times. However, the archive itself should also be part of the backup plan and protected against system failure.

Objectives	Email backups	Email archiving
Eliminate mailbox quotas	○	●
Eliminate PST files	◑	●
Reduce storage requirements through de-duplication And compression	◕	●
Reduce the workload of email servers and simplify backup And restore processes	○	●
Provide complete, tamper-proof and long-term Email retention	◑	●
Helps to meet compliance requirements	◑	●
Assistance with eDiscovery scenarios	◕	●
Full-text indexing of emails for fast searches	◑	●
End users: restore lost emails quickly and easily	◑	●

● Fully applies   ◕ Applies   ◑ Partially applies   ◔ Applies to a lesser extent   ○ Doesn't apply

The ratings in this table are based on the fundamental concepts of backups and email archiving. The functions of backup and email archiving solutions may vary, depending on the vendor.

The Benefits of Email Archiving for the IT Department

IT decision-makers are coming under increasing pressure due to the burgeoning tide of data. The time and resources needed to guarantee that such data remains secure, retrievable and permanently available are increasing all the time. Email archiving can help significantly reduce this pressure:

- The option of deleting emails from the server the moment they are archived helps cut storage requirements, not to mention the workload on the email server and the associated running costs. The data volume on the email server can be kept at a constantly low level and mailbox quotas become obsolete.
- The risk of irretrievably losing emails is minimized. Even regular backups of the email server (e.g. using incremental backups) cannot eliminate this risk entirely. Important: archives should always be backed up as well!
- Archiving reduces the complexity of the backup and restore process. Keeping data volumes on the email server low means that the backup process is quicker and requires less storage – and, in a disaster-recovery scenario, restoring the mail server from the backup volumes is much faster.

- Administrators can consolidate emails stored decentrally and archive simply. This helps avoid problems caused by PST files and emails being distributed across local user systems.
- Consolidating emails that have been stored decentrally and fully archiving all emails makes it easier for an IT department to migrate to another email platform, for example in the case of a change of provider.
- If the archiving tool provides a self-service search and retrieval function, IT departments will no longer have to invest time and effort in restoring emails from old backups. The average user can access his archive at will without assistance.

The Benefits of Email Archiving For Businesses Beyond IT

When email archiving as a key element of email management is integrated in a company's IT strategy and information management policy, this can deliver benefits in all areas of a company and help mitigate the financial, legal and technical challenges.

Protect Against Data Loss
It is always possible for employees to delete important emails – whether by accident, out of ignorance, or even with malicious intent. Scenarios in which a user deletes the entire contents of a mailbox on leaving the company are particularly serious. Around the globe, critical data is lost this way every day. With the aid of an email archiving solution, however, all existing and future inbound and outbound email traffic can be fully archived, allowing emails to be archived before they even reach the user and data loss avoided.

Helps With Email Compliance
Email archiving can support compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, the responsibility for which usually lies with the company's management. A breach of archiving duties can result in fiscal penalties and, in some cases, even litigation under civil law.

For most companies, therefore, it makes sense to archive all relevant emails and file attachments completely and in a form that is tamper-proof and permanently available and retrievable. Email archiving can deal with this task effectively, while also facilitating the use of emails as evidence in a court of law. The EU eIDAS regulation has reinforced the probative value of electronic documents in the European judicial region. In the USA, it is not uncommon for emails to be used as evidence in court. Here, they often form the basis of complex eDiscovery proceedings in which reams of corporate emails are trawled through in order to locate and preserve a specific item of information. Therefore, a company should be in a position to run a search through its entire email stock in the case of a discovery scenario and have the data exported in a standard format, where necessary.

Reduce IT Cost and Effort
Email archiving enables a business to cut the email management costs incurred by the company's IT department. Storage requirements can often be reduced significantly by

swapping out emails from the mail servers. At the same time, the IT department is spared the laborious task of restoring specific emails from backups or email servers in response to a user request. IT experts can invest the freed-up capacity in more important projects.

Availability of Business-Critical Data

A critical aspect when backing up email servers is the time lag before data can be restored following a loss event. In the worst case, the company will not be able to access business-critical information contained in emails during the downtime, which can often last several hours or even days. An independent archive can eliminate this problem. If the email server fails or data are lost, all archived emails will ideally remain available for all search and recovery operations. Business activity continues without interruption.

Increase User Productivity in Everyday Business

Ensuring that emails, as a critical information resource, are available quickly, comprehensively, at any time in any place can help increase a company's productivity. In the case of some email archiving solutions, emails in the archive even remain accessible via the user's customary folder structure. Also, given that an archiving tool renders mailbox quotas unnecessary, the self-service features offered by many archiving solutions mean that users no longer have to invest precious time in reorganizing mailboxes or clearing out insignificant emails. In the meantime, the IT service desk is free to get on with more important tasks.

Fast ROI

Using an archiving solution for emails reduces the workload on the IT department and can significantly cut storage costs. As a rule, the solution will pay for itself within a short period of time. Companies are also able to mitigate their exposure to financial risks stemming from data loss or legal disputes.

Does Email Archiving Help a Company to Comply With the EU GDPR?

The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) harmonizes data privacy laws in Europe, placing an emphasis on the protection of personal data. In different areas, therefore, companies must ensure that personal data is handled in a manner that complies with the terms of the GDPR. Breaches can attract fines of up to EUR 20 million or 4 percent of a company's total global turnover of the preceding financial year, whichever is higher.

Complying with the data privacy rules set down in the GDPR is a corporate-wide challenge involving numerous processes and procedures. Email archiving tools can help businesses meet several core requirements of the EU regulation. Even companies outside the EU would be well advised to familiarize themselves with the GDPR if they intend to process the personal data of EU citizens during everyday business.

Email archiving tools can help to comply with the following GDPR articles, for example:

- **Right of access (Art. 15 GDPR):** The powerful search function in an email archiving solution allows emails and file attachments concerning e.g. a specific customer or employee to be located and exported quickly. Companies are in a position to provide third parties with information, whenever required.

- **Right to erasure (Art. 17 GDPR):** Documents containing personal data may also need to be stored in an audit-proof manner, i.e. protected against erasure and manipulation during statutory or regulatory retention periods. Of great help here are functions that support deletion/retention management and allow the company to comply with GDPR requirements.

- **Right to data portability (Art. 20 GDPR)**: Natural persons are entitled to request the disclosure of any personal data concerning them and have it provided in a structured, commonly used and machine-readable format, and to have this data transferred to another "controller". An archiving solution should comply with the right to data portability by providing an export function that supports all common email formats (EML, MSG, PST).

- **Right to object (Art. 21 GDPR):** The GDPR stipulates that if a company wishes to process personal data, it must demonstrate that it has obtained the data subject's consent to do so. The data subject must also be able to withdraw that consent. The email archiving software captures consent and the withdrawal thereof expressed by email in an upstream system (e.g. an online shop, email marketing system, etc.). Resulting transaction mails – for example opt-ins of email marketing or lead management systems – are copied to the email archive.

Orderliness and transparency in handling personal data are key requirements when it comes to complying with the GDPR – from the collection and storage/accessing of the data, up to the point when the data is deleted. Deploying powerful email archiving software is, therefore, an important step on the path to GDPR conformity.

Check List: How to Find the Right Email Archiving Solution

When choosing email archiving software, all legal, economic and technical requirements should be taken into account in addition to corporate interests. Preparing a list of requirements can make it easier to find an appropriate solution:

☐ **Flexible storage management:** Choosing an archiving software that uses methods such as de-duplication and compression can help reduce storage requirements by as much as 70 percent. Flexible storage management also means that fast, expensive storage media can be reserved for current emails; a good system will always transfer older, less frequently accessed emails to slower, cheaper storage.

☐ **Easy to install and run:** Simple installation makes it easier to get the software up and running, while intuitive handling facilitates rapid implementation of the archiving system. Having all the necessary components, e.g. database systems, integrated during setup helps save time, while reducing costs and administrative effort.

☐ **Archiving existing emails:** When you roll out the new software, it should be no problem to archive current emails stored in individual mailboxes, public folders, and shared mailboxes and email files.

☐ **User friendly:** Users should be able to access their archived emails as usual via Microsoft Outlook, browser, or while on the road with a tablet or smartphone.

☐ **Self-service for the user:** Not all archiving solutions allow staff to access email volumes by themselves. But the workload on an IT department can be reduced significantly if the new solution allows users to work productively within the archive.

☐ **Certification:** For many companies, it's important that the software permits GDPR-compliant working standards and, where required, boasts appropriate certification.

☐ **Flexibility:** The archiving software should support all conventional email systems and archiving methods. Ideally, it should also be possible to realize customized application scenarios via an integrated API.

☐ **Fit for Purpose:** Your archiving tool must be a good fit for the size and requirements of the business. For example, it is rarely the case that an SMB will need a large enterprise solution, rather software that is tailored to the small or mid-sized company in terms of functional scope and total cost of ownership (TCO**).**

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