

Streamline Email Storage

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Since its inception, email has gone from a simple means of sending quick messages to a full-blown force to be reckoned with in the data center. Email is used to quickly and widely disseminate vital information, send important documents and presentations, and open doors to valuable business deals.

“The days that businesses considered email as just a communications tool are long gone,” notes Dave Hunt, CEO of archiving firm C2C Systems (www.c2c.com). “Presently, email is a knowledge cache, a tool for corporate governance, and a record that can enable effective regulatory compliance and e-discovery practices.” Because of all that email has become, archiving it requires business intelligence and policy development, Hunt adds. With that in mind, here are some tips for boosting an enterprise’s email storage power.

■ Base Plans On Existing Storage & Projected Data Growth

When calculating storage requirements, a data center manager should factor in existing database storage, PST (personal storage table) data, and ongoing archive data extracts, advises Hunt. Be sure to take compression ratios and index requirements into account, as well. Repository reporting provides trend analysis to assure that growth patterns fall in line with expectations.

Hunt adds that the location of the archive server is a critical decision when the current infrastructure is distributed over a geographically wide area and using network connectivity. An incorrect configuration could impact the overall success of an archiving project due to compromised performance.

■ Manage The Pilot Phase

When creating a storage archiving system, IT is likely to find that it’s easier to run a pilot project first, to make sure the system is suitable for the enterprise. A pilot is also helpful for running tests of the software, equipment, and other resources being used. The scope of a pilot or testing process will need to be communicated to all stakeholders, Hunt notes. The items to share include the goal of the test, how results will be measured, and how they will be applied when moving from the testing phase into full implementation.

“Undefined goals can let projects drift,” Hunt says. “The beta user community would ideally be drawn from differing departments and users and should not be heavily populated with IT technical staff.” He adds that this should be the case because IT staff tend to resolve issues directly rather than reporting issues, and that might affect the results of the test.

■ Assemble An Archive Support Team & Assign Specific Tasks

To drive the archiving process forward, key staff members must be given specific tasks, Hunt says. These include deploying desktop updates, purchasing and maintaining hardware, adjusting backup routines, provisioning storage, drafting policies, communicating with the legal department on data retention issues, and developing a laptop support strategy.

Although many IT staff members will take on numerous responsibilities when it comes to archiving email, drawing distinctions about these larger needs can be helpful for creating more cohesion in terms of staff roles.

■ **Research Options With Long-Term Cost In Mind**

Once storage and backup requirements are determined, IT managers should consider both in-house and outsourced options, says Ahmar Abbas, senior vice president of remote infrastructure management at CSS Corp. (www.csscorp.com). “The IT managers should develop a good map of their storage requirements, including how much data is structured, like databases, and how much is unstructured,” he says, adding that managers should examine associated growth rates for both of those types of data.

When considering in-house options, IT managers will probably consider various virtualization and deduplication technologies, which can reduce overall storage requirements and stretch email archiving budgets further. IT managers should consider using outsourced storage providers for backup or archives, Abbas believes. But in both cases, analysis should be done based on total cost of ownership, including the funding needed for staff members who are required to support the storage environment.

■ **Consider Enterprise Archiving Technology With Shortcuts**

Tom McCaffrey, director of archiving at Kroll Ontrack (www.krollontrack.com), notes that organizations can improve email storage through the use of enterprise information archiving technology. He says that once a message is ingested into the archive, after a predetermined duration, the message can be replaced by a shortcut on the email server and the user’s mailbox. In addition to the benefit of moving the content from a server to lower-cost archive storage, email server performance is significantly improved as content is removed during shortcutting, McCaffrey states.

“Shortcuts effectively eliminate the need for mailbox quotas, enabling organizations to get rid of offline mail stores such as PSTs and NSFs,” he says. “Email storage is further optimized through the retention policy and scheduled destruction capability of the archive.” Retention schedules are determined by the organization to meet the needs of the business and achieve compliance with regulatory requirements, McCaffrey adds. Messages that are older than the retention period, and not under legal hold, are destroyed, further reducing the strain on the mail server and the amount of email stored within the archive.

“Archives also improve email storage by providing a central repository for authorized users to search for discovery, investigations, audits, and compliance,” McCaffrey says. “Knowing where

the organization's email is, optimizing what is kept, and making it searchable reduces business and legal risks and reduces e-discovery costs for organizations.”