

# Why archive email?

You never know when you might have to rely on emails as evidence in court, so it's best to keep everything, advises **David Kelleher**

**E**mail is a primary source of documentation for businesses, and it has taken on an increasingly critical role in corporate litigation and court cases.

Within a single organisation, perspectives on email archiving and email management can vary widely. The legal department, for example, sees email as an essential factor in its discovery response strategy. Storage, backups, problematic and corrupt PST files, overloaded email servers and performance are the IT department's major concerns. The compliance team worries about preservation and control issues, while employees want to access all their email from anywhere in the world to improve productivity.

Whichever way you look at the issue, a company can ill-afford not to archive email, because it never knows when and which email it will need at a future date. That email may be a "to-do" list compiled by sales, but it may also be an email that could save a company thousands of dollars in legal fees and fines.

The decision to go for email archiving will be based on the size of the company, storage requirements and legal obligations. In small and medium-sized businesses, email archiving is mostly a productivity tool and a means of moving old emails from their overloaded mail servers to a central archive that can store a huge amount of data, reducing dependency on PST files and allowing administrators and end users to search for and retrieve emails at will.

For enterprise, the above reasons also apply, but legal and compliance issues will drive the case for archiving. The ability to



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access and retrieve emails within minutes without the need to trawl through massive and complex backups is also important.

#### What should be stored?

Simply put, there are two options: keep everything or delete everything. Keeping everything is the best option because email is a two-way communication

process. Deleting an email does not erase all traces of that communication because at least one recipient would also have a copy. Keeping a copy of every email will ensure that your own email will not be used against you. Companies need to define a retention policy based on the importance of the email being archived. The CEO's email, for example, should be retained for longer periods than that of an office clerk.

One big advantage of archiving is that it reduces the size of end users' mailboxes and also the number of requests for more storage. IT administrators can impose 30- to 90-day storage limits, but they should also explain that no email will be lost, it is safely archived and accessible at any time.

#### Privacy issues

Although email archiving makes perfect business sense, privacy issues may arise in some organisations. Can an employer retain and monitor any employees' email?

Some companies argue that email sent using the company network becomes its property, and therefore management has a right to check employees' mailboxes. On the other hand, privacy rights groups argue that checking employees' email breaches their right to privacy. Striking a balance is not easy but, at the end of the day, it is a question of trust.

Every state, every country, has its own rules and regulations regarding email archiving and email use. Companies need to be aware of all of the regulations before setting policy or acting against a worker.

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