Email Archiving: It's Time for an Update

Changes in business and regulations create an opportunity for a fresh approach to an old practice

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Email, long a mainstay of business, is more important than ever. Every day, billions of emails are sent, with attachments growing in size and complexity. At the same time, email is central to compliance with the expanding number of business regulations across all regions and industries.

These factors are combining to thrust the often-unsung discipline of email archiving into the spotlight. As out-of-date architectures are showing their age in terms of cost and efficiency, forward-looking IT leaders are developing strategies to implement modern email archiving systems.

What many IT leaders often fail to appreciate is that today's archiving technologies not only safeguard business records, but also streamline workflow, and democratize corporate knowledge by satisfying users' demands for anytime, anywhere access to archive files.

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Archaic email archiving causes problems

Although business models have changed along with IT infrastructures, email archiving has not kept up. Many of the email archiving technologies currently in use, such as that in Microsoft Office 365™, were not designed for current usage patterns. Although they take in data efficiently, finding and extracting data isn't as easy. This results in a number of IT and end user workflow problems, including:

- **A clumsy interface.** Because older archiving systems were intended for use by administrators only, end users frequently experience difficulty when trying to find information. Typically, mobile apps are not available.

- **Poor search and e-discovery.** Since the archive was designed as a static repository rather than an active resource, search capabilities are often far less functional, and much slower than many popular search engines. Because the archive was not designed for end user access, today's knowledge workers could not take advantage of the strategic information contained in their own emails, at least not without help from an IT administrator.

- **Helpdesk burden.** The above deficiencies result in additional time, effort and expense on the part of support personnel responding to the needs of end users.

All of these issues adversely impact organizations. When knowledge workers are unable to access the files they need from email archives, work cannot get done, customers cannot be served, compliance cannot be certified and e-discovery cannot take place.

Further, out-of-date email archives often experience diminished return on investment (ROI). There are several causes. First, running and maintaining an on-premises email archiving system requires time and expense to update and refresh both hardware and software on an ongoing basis. Second, maintaining this infrastructure requires increasingly costly IT administrators and support personnel to be retained on staff. Third, in spite of such effective data management practices as setting mailbox
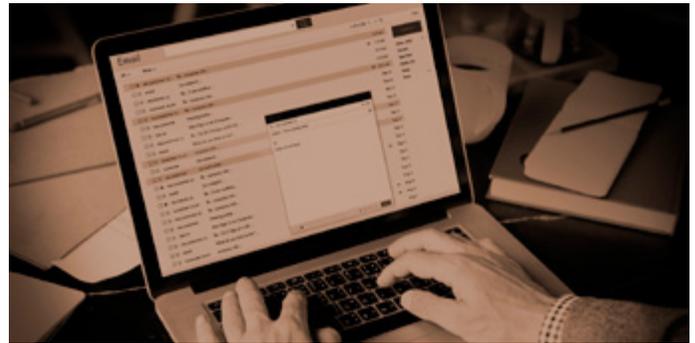
quotas and retention periods, storage costs typically increase beyond expectation as data volumes expand.

In addition, archive search requests are inefficient and time consuming. Because they are not included in normal workflow, search requests are often initiated through helpdesk tickets. This process consumes IT support resources and can delay strategic projects aimed at increasing corporate competitiveness. And, the inability of employees to access email archives from their mobile devices erodes productivity in an era in which many employees are increasingly mobile.

Finally, e-discovery that cannot be performed in a timely fashion can create unacceptable costs and delays. These make an organization extremely vulnerable to legal actions and regulatory searches, since even minor requests for information can require exorbitant amounts of time and expense.

The Mimecast solution

With the importance of email archiving increasing, the unacceptable performance of out-of-date archiving technologies demands change. The Mimecast solution addresses the needs of businesses in all industries for compliance, legal risk mitigation, mobility, and workflow efficiency. The Mimecast solution also improves manageability and reliability while lowering costs. Its key capabilities include:

- **Independence from production email.** Unlike Office 365, which includes archiving in its E3 and E5 packages, archives are not stored on the same servers that handle send-and-receive traffic. Thus, performance issues or outages on the production email servers do not affect archive access or performance.
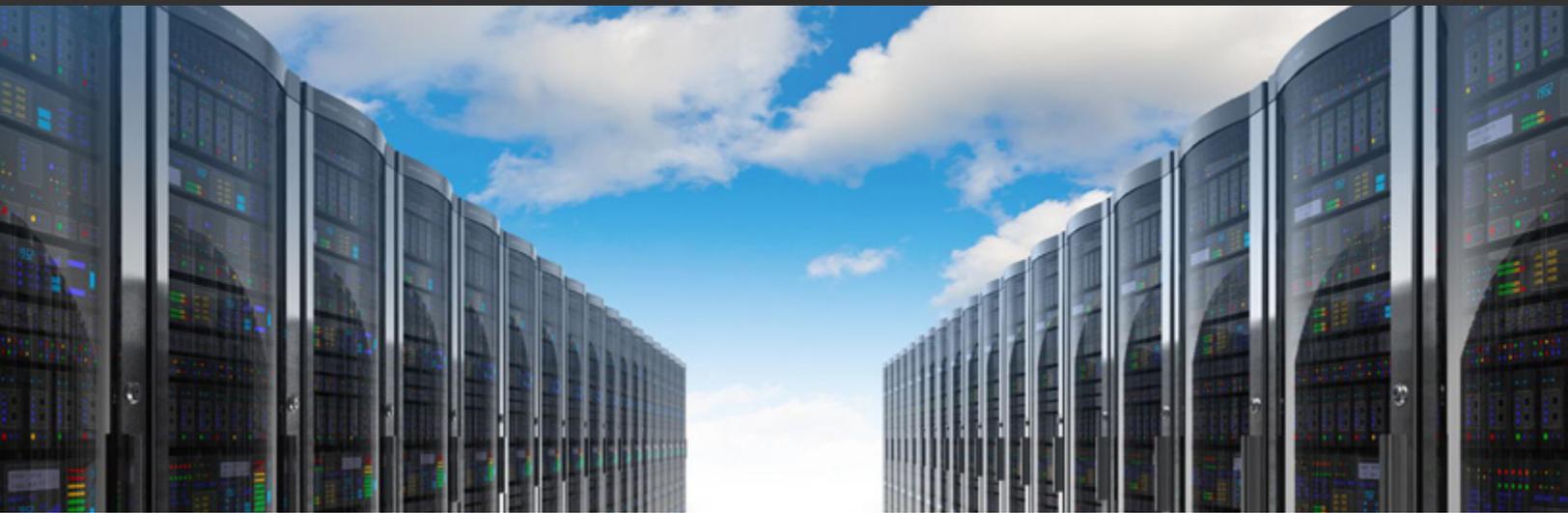
- **Immutability.** Because the Mimecast archive is separate from the email server, the data stored in it is unaffected should the email server become corrupted. In addition, email archives are stored on WORM (write once, read many) storage, meaning they can't be tampered with and are ideal for long-term retention.

- **Geographic replication of data.** When data is physically in separate, geographically different locations, an outage or disaster in one location will not affect data in a different location. Mimecast stores data in triplicate across at least two geographically dispersed data centers, a best practice for disaster recovery as well as compliance.

- **Robust activity logging.** To protect data and support compliance and litigation, Mimecast enables administrators to track the activities of users and see the types of files they have been accessing and sharing. All administrative or end user actions taken on archive data is logged in order to document the chain of custody.

- **GDPR compliance.** The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) grants citizens the right to know what personal data is stored, where and how it is being used. Citizens may also require data to be purged regardless of where it is located. Mimecast provides a number of capabilities that support GDPR compliance, including comprehensive email security, rapid search to support Subject Access Requests, and fine-grained control to address 'right to be forgotten' requests.

Cloud-based productivity

Because Mimecast is cloud-based, organizations avoid the pitfalls of purchasing, maintaining, troubleshooting and upgrading an on-premises archiving system, including hardware, software, storage and networking components. Because it is cloud-based, the Mimecast solution is a predictable monthly operating expense rather than a capital expense. And, Mimecast does not apply charges for extended retention or storage overages.

In addition, the Mimecast solution leverages the scalability of the cloud. Deployments can range from as few as a couple dozen users to hundreds of thousands. It also affords centralized administration and worldwide coverage.

When it comes to enabling productivity through workflow and collaboration, Mimecast delivers several essential capabilities, including:

- **Responsiveness.** For an archiving system to be useful for workflow and collaboration, response times must be short—otherwise, users may give up. Mimecast enables end users to search their own archives, delivering search speeds of just seconds, a velocity that is backed by the fastest search SLA on the market, irrespective of the number of mailboxes. This also relieves IT admins from the task of fetching emails or attachments when they appear to be missing.

- **Outlook integration.** Because Microsoft Outlook is widely used across businesses of all kinds, Mimecast Outlook integration means email users at the majority of organizations can seamlessly search their archive without leaving this familiar environment.

- **Mobility.** With workforces across all organizations being increasingly mobile, Mimecast apps for iPhone, Android, Windows Phone and BlackBerry devices enable users to access email archives quickly and easily.

- **ROI.** Mimecast cuts costs of email administration significantly, while bringing archived data into the mainstream of workflow to enable higher levels of productivity.

Conclusion

Increasing reliance on email to conduct business, combined with the decades-long surge in business regulation, has plucked email archiving from the shadows and placed it at center stage. While current approaches to email archiving can transform business processes for greater efficiency and productivity, siloed architectures that date from the 1990s cannot deliver the kind of scalability, reliability and manageability that today's businesses require.

On-premises solutions are unwieldy and expensive, and many cloud-based solutions fail to capitalize on inherent cloud capabilities, such as independence from production email and geographic replication of data. In addition, archaic architectures can't enable the workflow productivity and collaboration today's knowledge workers demand, particularly from mobile devices.

The Mimecast solution addresses these issues, bringing email archiving up-to-date by providing:

- Savings, thanks to the subscription-based cloud model and centralized administration.

- Compliance, by delivering data immutability, detailed logging, fast search and e-discovery performance, and scalability.

- Streamlined workflow and collaboration, by empowering employees with fast access to archived emails and attachments, including mobile access.

The new approach to email archiving delivered by the Mimecast solution not only eliminates the drawbacks of out-of-date systems, but also transforms email archiving from an inefficient cost center to a productivity enabler. This, in turn, efficiently preserves important records and enables organizations to compete more effectively now and in the future.

About Mimecast

Mimecast Limited (NASDAQ:MIME) makes business email and data safer for more than 26,400 customers and millions of employees worldwide. Founded in 2003, the company's next-generation cloud-based security, archiving and continuity services protect email, and deliver comprehensive email risk management in a single, fully-integrated subscription service.