

Controlling the Electronic Messaging Chaos

Finding the right email management system

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In today's business world, email has become a blessing and a curse. Sure, the pace in which we turn around communications, versus the old "dictate-type-edit-type-snail mail" paradigm our fathers used, moves at lightning speed. But all the speed and ease that email brings inundates the average employee today. In fact, the typical US knowledge worker sends and receives approximately 25,000 emails per year, and this number continues to grow. That is over 100 messages per work day! Moreover, various research reports indicate that the number of corporate emails has grown to an estimated 40 billion on a daily basis in 2006, with no end to this growth in sight. And there is a rising legal liability in these quick-and-dirty communications: Approximately 20% of companies have been ordered by courts to produce employee emails during litigation or regulatory hearings.

The New Role of Email Management

Saving, organizing and retrieving email, which is termed as email archiving or email management (EMM), has become a business-critical application for many organizations. Rising email volumes, increased regulatory and legal pressures as well as concerns regarding electronic records make managing email a top priority for most organizations. In essence, it simply can't be ignored. "Email management is a key factor in compliance and corporate governance procedures and a potential landmine in legal discovery initiatives," says Bill Lyons, CEO, AXS-One. "That's why it shouldn't be seen as a secondary function with niche technology, but as a core component of records compliance management." But these policies, procedures, governance guidelines and the monitoring of such processes is an impossible task without the help of nimble software.

Delving into the EMM Marketplace

So it's no surprise that the EMM marketplace is growing fast — it's the fastest growth segment of electronic records — with a flurry of new entrants as well as acquisitions. In North America, IBM's acquisition of FileNet and OpenText's acquisition of Hummingbird this past year signifies that both acquiring companies will have multiple EMM solutions with different strengths. Which of these solutions survive and which are sunsetted should have users thinking about their next step.

However, the action isn't just on the US home front. Email is ubiquitous, and as such, EMM is a global marketplace with software providers competing from around the world. In regards to software, generally the dominant companies are US-based: Microsoft, IBM, Oracle and other heavyweights. Overall, the US has traditionally held this advantage, owning over 80% of the software marketplace. But the EMM marketplace offers competitors from all over the globe. Canada is home base for Incite Software, Activis Technologies, Inc. and Fortiva; the UK is headquarters for C2C Systems Ltd. and CC Data Ltd.; and New Zealand is home for Convergence, Ltd., a Premier IBM Business Partner and AfterMail, which was purchased last January by US-based Quest Software (www.quest.com). Therefore, expect more acquisitions and alliances this coming year in this dynamic marketplace, as competitors seek to gain a technology or market-share advantage.

Trend-Setting Factors of EMM

Email messages contain an increasing volume of critical electronic records that must be retained for legal, compliance or governance purposes. In your father's office 20 or 30 years ago, no permanent records existed that

weren't physically printed on paper, due to legal precedents (microfilm existed but hadn't been through the necessary legal challenges). Now, 60% to 70% of business critical data is, at some point, contained in email, so the need to manage, store, search and retrieve these electronic records is paramount. Thus, EMM is now mission critical.

The character of EMM plans in most organizations has begun to shift from the traditional IT project. Due to the liability and regulatory implications, in addition to the "teeth" that have been put in laws like Sarbanes-Oxley, HIPAA and various SEC regulations, decision making for EMM is now being driven by higher levels of management. EMM projects are increasingly sponsored by executives, rather than just as an IT initiative that was traditionally driven by storage volume issues. Plus, other trends have emerged in the past year:

1. A shift has moved away from the simple archiving of email messages to actual real-time, active surveillance so that messages are flagged and halted for further review if they contain certain key words.
2. Email messages are increasingly viewed as a formal record, a subset of all electronic records, which are subject to the same verification, indexing and preservation procedures as other formal records.
3. Messages coming in are tagged and categorized, which begins the compliance and governance process much sooner than before.

This practice of closely monitoring communications that enter the organization is becoming a growing trend. Kon Leong,

CEO of ZipLip (www.ziplip.com), says, "Apart from OCC (Outbound Content Compliance), the biggest trend today is the desire by firms to automatically tag email data coming into an organization with categories and metadata so that corporate governance and policies can be applied to digital data. Not only does this provide significant advantages in any (future) litigation, it dramatically improves compliance, corporate governance and knowledge management around email." And just as important is OCC, the practice of halting messages from exiting the organization, if containing potential regulatory or governance violations. This process is the clearest example of active surveillance and is in tremendous demand. Therefore, if you are evaluating EMM software this year, you should insist on this feature.

Shopping for the Right Solution

The email management (including instant messaging) market has been so active this past year that it has appeared like more of a gunslinger's shootout than a software marketplace. In fact, there are so many choices on the table — over 200 — that end user organizations have a difficult time making their software selections. Plus, the fact that there are also hardware-based solutions, sort of an "EMM in a box," such as from Mirapoint, makes this decision even more daunting. When considering EMM solutions, organizations should bear in mind:

- 1 Certain vendors specialize in specific vertical markets.
- 2 Some vendors have run into scaling limitations due to the constraint of their base architecture when volumes soar.
- 3 There are varying approaches, such as hosted versus in-house, storage-centric versus process-centric, and collaborative versus archival (of course, there are offerings that straddle some of those basic approaches).

Thus, what is best for one organization may not be the best solution for the organization across the street. As with any IT decision, hard requirements come first and flashy demonstrations later. Ultimately, it is the support provided after the sale that may tip the balance in favor of a vendor choice, since the solution chosen will be what your organization will need to live with for the next several years, and its performance may have stark implications during litigation or regulatory scrutiny. Therefore, the consequences of a poor vendor selection and associated

implementation may be significant for not only the organization, but also for the individual managers within it in the form of fines or even jail time.

Vendors offering hosted alternatives, like Zantaz, Computer Associates (formerly iLumin) and newcomer, Fortiva, argue that they can take the load off an IT department for managing millions — even billions — of messages. “The question users need to ask themselves is, ‘Should this be our core competency?’” states Paul Chen, CEO of Fortiva. Meanwhile, providers that offer in-house solutions, such as OpenText, maintain that the only way to achieve complete compliance in highly regulated industries, like financial services and healthcare, is to have software running in-house on not only the internal mail server, but also the gateway.

So when evaluating EMM, bear in mind that regardless of market-share claims by vendors, there is no “one size fits all” that can make your decision simpler. Create your objectives, prioritize them and then take a look at what your competitors or industry peers might be using. Create a list of vendors to evaluate and look at their marketing materials for feature sets. Then, dig in, look at demonstrations, but more importantly, talk with other users of that particular software and narrow your choices. However, the selection process is not done there yet. Your organization will still need to negotiate price and terms as well as evaluate installation support, technical assistance and quality after the sale. Just be sure that you make a fully informed decision because the ramifications over the long run may be quite serious.

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