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SPECIAL REPORT

COMPUTERWORLD TECHGUIDE STORAGE PART 2

Legal lottery

Organisations are taking chances on compliance and penalties when they delegate the responsibility of retention and management of email messages to their employees.

By Melanie Liew

Be aware of the risks, liability and exposure associated with corporate information. The retention and management of email messages is a corporate responsibility. Today, many companies have relegated this responsibility to users and this has long term implications for organisations when it comes to compliance and general best business practice.



This is the warning issued by John Rade (left) of Axis-One and Sean Kopelke (right) of KVS Asia Pacific.

Rade is president and chief executive officer of Axis-One while Kopelke is Business Development manager of KVS Asia Pacific.

IT is faced with more and more application performance and availability challenges because email has become a critical part of business operations.



In fact, email has become the livelihood of business. On top of that, email files are growing both in size and number. In contrast, data being deleted is falling.



Joseph Wong (left), principal consultant, Legato Software, "Email archival is a necessity, not a luxury."

Rade added, "If a company is being sued, it might need to call up all archived company email containing references to certain company names. While the email archival system should perform as expected and retrieve all of the relevant email, this only provides a sub-section of the information the company requires to begin the process of making informed decisions."

Other areas of pertinent knowledge discovery that needs to be investigated might include the company's IM (instant messaging) communications, office documents and transactional records that flow and change from system to system. The email messages have to be reviewed in context to other relevant data in order to be prudently



acted on.

Rade said, "Email archival started as a regulatory requirement within the financial services sector. As such, the industry moved at a fast adoption pace to keep in line with new regulatory requirements for email retention. What many organisations are now learning as a result of these early undertakings is that scalability and architectures affect the overall systems dramatically."

"It is not just enough to have unlimited storage and provisioning capabilities. The applications architecture has to be designed to make the most effective use of the storage for writing and reading that is conducive for the business."

For example, many systems can be efficiently queried for email messages sent by Jane Doe to John Q Public between April 5 and April 7 that contain the word "guarantee". However, that is not the reality of the business requirement. The reality is that a company may need to search and download all of the email messages and attachments sent and received by Jane Doe and 25 of her co-workers from the period April 5 1995 to April 5 2003. Most systems have not been designed to efficiently archive massive amounts of unstructured data that can be stored in a high TCO (total cost of ownership) model providing storage options based on SLOs (service level objectives). These should be mapped into SLAs (service level agreements) which can be mapped into a closed loop business process.

In fact, research firm, Meta Group estimates that the global daily email traffic has topped 15 billion, a figure expected to skyrocket to 35 billion by 2005. The type of information contained within such email has also become increasingly "corporate-sensitive". Meta Group estimates that the amount of corporate knowledge being communicated by email is around 50 per cent, increasing to 75 per cent by 2005.

According to an executive brief entitled Email Risk Management: A Growing Concern for the Modern Enterprise from research organisation, International Data Corporation (IDC), "Companies must set a policy about how long they are going to keep email, then back it up with an appropriate storage solution. This is crucial because it defines a company's culpability in many different scenarios such as lawsuits, investigations or disputes with employees, partners or customers."

As such, enterprises must be able to back up their written email policies with technological framework.

According to the same IDC brief, "Externally, an email policy backed up by technological controls, can help thwart loss or theft of intellectual property. It can also help ensure proper communications with customers and partners. The policy can address numerous areas, such as preventing sensitive material from being sent via email or sending reminders to key employees to answer customer email enquiries in a timely manner. Policy controls also allow administrators to set parameters for what is saved, ensuring that only important communications are saved in databases."

Said Wong from Legato, "At present, when an organisation needs to retrieve information from an old email, it will usually be saved in an archive email folder on an individual's personal desktop folder. If it cannot be found there, the company will try to recover it from the computer's main backup files. This may be very risky. This type of practice clearly demonstrates the lack of understanding companies have for the importance of email management and storage."

This situation is risky and can be likened to that of playing the legal lottery.

Wong said, "Without an email management system in place, keeping the running of a company smooth, with sound records of business communication and fulfilling the legal requirements may not be possible."

"Email archival and retrieval helps businesses reduce costs by centralising and consolidating email. It helps to boost productivity by allowing users to easily access their archived email and attachments from anywhere in the network. It minimises risks by enabling record management and retrieval for all email and IM (instant messaging) messages assisting in litigation support or regulatory compliance."

Today, IT managers are overburdened by requests to find and restore email. Chief executive officers are concerned with safeguarding their important email assets while maintaining accountability of corporate communications. In order to manage storage costs while ensuring corporate guidelines for electronic correspondence, a new approach to email management is required. One way to do this is to use EmailXtender (EX) which is a centralised data storage and retrieval system that makes enterprise email easier to administer and use. It enables quick email restoration after virus attacks and helps reduce server backup time. It automatically moves data off the email message server and into an email archival system, capturing and indexing all incoming and outgoing email.

In addition, instant messages (IM) can also be captured and stored within the EmailXtender system.

Kopelke of KVS said, "Organisations have to do more with the data they are archiving. The simple storage of email is not enough. Customers are demanding management of email such as information lifecycle management and are also expecting increased methods of accessing and retrieving data."

For example, simple key word searches are fine for small organisations. But, as the volume increases, complex search capabilities are a must for productive use. Also, customers are demanding tools to manage "retrieved data" in workflow processes for staff to interact and share the retrieved data.

Brian Babineau, senior analyst with research company, Enterprise Storage Group said, "In a recent survey, our research concluded that 61 per cent of IT users see email and messaging as a top priority for data protection."

IT is now faced with more application performance and availability challenges because email has become a critical part of business operations.

"One of the few solutions to the problem is server consolidation and its enabling technologies which aid application availability. However, managing the email attachments complicates the server consolidation process," said Babineau.



Said Yorgen Edholm (left), chief executive officer, Accellion, "Email has 'grown up' to be the default storage and archival system, but technology has not kept pace. Using the email system as a storage and delivery method is like having FedEx deliver pianos. Email and attached documents will have to be separated. Uncoupling the archive and retrieval from the email system to near line storage decreases costs and allows email to move at the speed of business."

"Email is the ad hoc collaboration tool of choice. There are products that secure and track transactions and file transfer for specific applications, but there are many features creeping into such solutions. Many tend to be complex and cumbersome and not within normal workflow. Business users require something much more basic – an easy-to-use, secure and traceable way to deliver large files. Having email separate from document archival and retrieval is the right technology move. All that is required is a separate, electronic document delivery (EDD) system."

In this case, an EDD system adds a plug-in to Microsoft Outlook or Lotus Notes such that when the user attaches a file, it gets uploaded to an attachment caching appliance and

replaced in the email with a link. The file attachment gets replicated to other caching appliances closest to the recipients. The recipient clicks on the link from within the email and downloads the file at local area network (LAN) speeds.

To this end, Accellion's product called Accellion Attachments decreases the -administration requirements by replacing mail servers with zero maintenance caching appliances, while increasing server performance and ensuring delivery of large files, even gigabyte files easily and securely from within the email application.

In any case, backup operations are faster because the messages are smaller.

In the final analysis, enterprises should have applications platforms to intelligently acquire and store many digital artifacts. These include email, IM, reports, office documents, voice, XML (extensible markup language) and short messages in a mix of storage devices that provide advanced storage partitions for WORM (write once read many) or CAS (content addressable storage). This will enable storage administrators to control costs that can be ubiquitously accessed by users and other systems.

The challenges are complex and it is more than just email. Some of the issues, said Rade of Axis-One are compliance, storage, retention and disposition, cost per megabyte managed, high value versus low value, real time versus near real time, collaboration, and legal requirements.

"The risk and exposure associated with each facet of your information service infrastructure is subject to potential scrutiny by legal experts."

"For this reason, the IT and business components of the enterprise need to -ensure that their partnership is a cohesive one," said Rade.

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