



Email Archiving as a migration tool to Exchange 2007

Overview

Planned or otherwise, email system outage is at best undesirable and at worst a cause of significant loss of revenue. When the time comes to initiate the roll-out and migration to Exchange 2007 the whole process should be as painless as possible. A well thought out and structured approach to Exchange data storage is required to make this possible.

Effective management of the data storage greatly reduces the cost (and risk) of the migration process and the ongoing operational costs.

For most organizations the migration to Exchange 2007 will involve investment in new server¹ hardware and operating systems and so the existing Exchange infrastructure will, for a period of time, co-exist with the newly deployed Exchange 2007 infrastructure.

This approach lends itself to the natural strategy of phased migration of data rather than a 'big bang' approach.

How Archiving helps reduce cost and risk

Studies have shown that, typically, up to 80% of the data held in mature Exchange servers (usually containing more than 4 years of email data) is static and is never re-read or processed, yet these emails require the same level of management and maintenance to that of live, active data.

The introduction of Archive One Policy Manager prior to migration can reduce the data within the existing Exchange Server (and therefore the data that needs to be migrated) dramatically through:

Data analysis

Archive One can produce very detailed analysis of the information located not only within the Exchange server but also PST files. The results of the analysis may dictate the need to remove data rather than migrate or archive.

Data sanitization

Archive One can remove data such as identifiable spam, inappropriate content and non business critical data from the Exchange information stores and PST files.

Archiving

Archive One can extract historical email data from the Exchange server based on many criteria, age of emails is a common criteria. Once data has been archived the original messages are replaced with small (circa 1Kb) Link Messages to provide end user seamless and real-time access to their archived data.

¹ Exchange Server 2007 requires a 64bit Operating System and hardware

Email Archiving As Part of Exchange Migration Plan

Building an archiving solution into the Exchange migration plan (as the first step) can provide a major reduction in the quantity of data that needs to move from one platform to the next.

Considering or planning a migration project also provides a great opportunity to review working practices to ensure they continue to be appropriate or if efficiencies can be adopted and applied, e.g. remove the reliance on PST files.

To maximize the benefit of data reduction, when approaching the actual date of migration, the scope of any existing archiving policies can be expanded to include a greater percentage of candidate data (e.g. archive all emails older than 3-5 days). This ensures the absolute minimum amount of data has to be migrated. After the migration has been completed, the policies can be relaxed back to the usual operational criteria (e.g. to archive all emails that are older than 30 days or have an attachment of more than 2048Kb).

Installing and implementing an email archiving solution prior to migration provides an opportunity to archive the majority of data, and if required PST files, from the Exchange server. The reduction of data will be reflected on the time required to perform the movement of the mailboxes when the migration occurs. Benefits include:

- The new Exchange stores will be small and efficient and backed up easily
- The quantities of mailboxes that can be migrated per day are greatly increased, and even the possibility of all mailboxes within one project²
- If a problem occurs with the migration due to unseen circumstances 'rolling back' is achieved with greater speed and reliability

It may be possible to reduce the new Exchange server physical storage requirement as it will be expected to provide full email operation but without the burden of directly having to host all of the historical information.

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² Mailbox data in flight is recorded by the Exchange servers' transaction log drives. These drives typically have smaller capacity to the information store drives. Transaction logs are cleared after every successful full online backup.