

## Email Archiving

Despite all the attention given to disaster recovery and backup, it has escaped most people's attention that failing to backup and archive email is often as big a problem as all the other forms of electronic data they worry about put together.

Worse still many users simply don't realise that their email is **NOT** backed up because much backup software **CANNOT** backup email. They think they are covered and they simply are not.

Email has become the default method for distributing most documents, despite the fact that it's probably the least efficient way of transferring files: it wins out because it's easy. This means that for many documents that we receive the only copy is kept in email folders creating huge capacity problems.

Even if we archive received mail, many organisations don't archive sent mail creating a huge potential liability through the commitments made, or inferred, on email. Increasingly email is accepted as documentary evidence of a commitment, of which no record is kept.

Most customers don't realise they have an obligation to maintain an archive of their emails under the Data Protection Act. Anyone can request a copy of any documentation under a Subject Access Request and the company has 40 days to find it and produce it or face a fine. The most common requestors are disgruntled ex-employees. Failing to find the appropriate document could therefore give rise to two separate fines, one under Data Protection and one through grievance procedures for which no defence is available.

In fact the cost of failing to retrieve email doesn't stop there as research has revealed that the cost of searching for these documents can exceed £30,000.

Archiving and backing up are not necessarily the same thing, although it usually makes sense to look at the processes together. Backing up is really keeping a second copy of a set of live data on a separate medium to the original, ideally in a different place. Archiving refers to moving the data offline to a cheaper location where it can be kept safely even though rarely, if ever, used. Archiving email makes sense on purely economic grounds. Keeping a central mass storage system is surprisingly cheap especially if someone manages it for you, and copies can be transmitted overnight to maintain network performance at busy times.

For many users with hosted email the process can be even easier with a copy kept centrally automatically and only downloaded when required. With email storage running to multiples gigabytes per user per annum it makes sense to plan archiving it for all users in an organisation rather than relying on individual users running their own routines. *Power email users can send an AVERAGE of 100 emails a day!*

Once archived a document should be capable of being retrieved via search, individually or en bloc. Beware, searching outside of destination, subject, sender and date is very difficult and potentially very expensive.

Of course, backup and archiving applied to all documents is a central element of any disaster recovery strategy and the ability to recover documents quickly and cheaply can go a long way to resolving problems when they occur, or avoiding them in the first place. The alternative may be more than your business is worth.