



Email Archiving: SaaS Strengths vs. On-Premise Solutions

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Email Archiving: SaaS Strengths vs. On-Premise Solutions

Email archiving can be implemented by subscribing to a hosted service—commonly called “software as a service” (SaaS)—or by licensing software and installing it in-house (on-premise).

This Ferris Research white paper explains the main strengths of the SaaS approach over that of the on-premise approach. To ensure balance, potential customers should also consider on-premise strengths that may apply in their environment.

Technology Background

SaaS Solutions

To access a SaaS application, you connect your email system to a hosted software service provider over the Internet. As with an on-premise solution, SaaS email archiving typically features search through the archive, retention policy definition and implementation, e-discovery production, and so on.

Examples of SaaS vendors are Dell Computer’s MessageOne, Global Relay, Google’s Postini, Iron Mountain, LiveOffice, Microsoft Exchange Hosted Services, Mimecast, Proofpoint’s Fortiva, and Symantec’s MessageLabs.

Software On-Premise Solutions

The most common approach is to install a software package on your organization’s Windows PC hardware. Vendors with this type of solution include Autonomy (Zantaz), AXS-One, EMC (Legato), IBM (CommonStore), Intradyn, Mimoso, Quest, Symantec (Enterprise Vault), and Waterford.

Appliances

Another type of on-premise solution is an appliance with preinstalled software. Appliances have points in common with both on-site and SaaS systems, and we do not include them in this software vs. service discussion.

Strengths of SaaS vs. On-Premise

In the following pages, we compare SaaS and on-site software approaches, including ease of installation, system maintenance, and costs.

Ease of Installation

It is a fairly simple matter to install a SaaS solution. An IT manager needs only to:

- Redefine MX records so that inbound and outbound email is routed through the service provider.
- Give the service provider's system access to the internal email system's journaling.
- Import your on-premise email archive into that of the SaaS application.

With on-premise solutions, the task is much more complex. The steps include:

- Specifying and deploying the relevant server.
- Specifying database requirements and coordinating with the database group to enable sufficient access.
- Defining the implementation and test plan to validate scalability and performance.
- Educating staff to maintain the software, and planning for upgrades of software, servers, and storage.
- Possibly purchasing, configuring, and deploying any supporting IT systems, such as a relational database, a backup system for the archive, or a high-availability cluster. The servers running each of these systems must be configured in order to improve their reliability and reduce the exposure to unintended or malicious interference.

Simplicity of System Maintenance

The main ongoing support tasks for an on-premise solution are:

- Providing technical support and a help desk. Some of the support tasks can be time-consuming and very disruptive, such as when a lawsuit forces support staff to quickly fulfill legal counsel's search and retrieval requests.
- Keeping current with other internal infrastructure, such as new versions of the internal email system and operating systems.
- Providing for ongoing growth of the archive by adding storage.
- Maintaining and improving the archive's performance.
- Installing new types of storage and migrating data from the old to the new storage. This is likely to happen several times during the life of an archiving product.
- Ensuring effective backup of the archive. This is difficult to predict and time-consuming to manage because of its growing size.
- Integrating other types of electronically stored information in addition to email.

With SaaS, most of these tasks are offloaded to the service provider.

IT Staff Focus

Most organizations have overstretched IT staff. With SaaS, your IT staff spends relatively little time dealing with the administration and maintenance of the technology. Instead, they focus on the business requirements of archiving and policy management.

Installation Costs

The costs of installing a SaaS solution are very low compared with those of on-premise solutions. A SaaS solution does not require large up-front expenditures for software licenses, storage, dedicated servers, and backup systems for the archive. Nor does it incur the extra costs of training for IT staff or the associated planning and installation time. The implementation costs for a SaaS solution are predictable and relatively fixed.

Total Cost of Ownership

The main elements of total cost of ownership (TCO) for on-premise solutions are:

- Software and hardware costs, including licenses, specialized servers, storage, patch management, upgrades, and hardware refresh. Replacement of hardware and migration of data at hardware end of life should also be taken into account when calculating the long-term retention of email.
- Backup and high availability of archive.
- IT support staff and/or consultants.
- The cost of migrating the archive to an alternative solution at system end of life. Note that email archiving technologies are still evolving, and leadership positions are unstable.
- The main TCO elements for SaaS solutions are:
 - Monthly user charges.
 - Storage costs (although not all vendors charge for storage).
 - The cost of migrating the archive away when you no longer want to use the SaaS provider.
 - The cost of special services; for example, for special search and retrieval services associated with e-discovery (although not all vendors charge for these services).

All things being equal, a SaaS solution is usually cheaper than a comparable on-premise solution. The case is strongest for small and medium-size organizations. The per-user cost for larger organizations is usually lower, as the costs are amortized over a larger user base.

Predictability of SaaS Costs

Generally, with SaaS, it is easier to predict your costs. For example, system growth is less likely to trigger a sudden surge in spending on storage hardware or new licenses and servers.

However, note that SaaS costs can balloon as a result of:

- Underestimation of storage needs, although this is not a problem with SaaS vendors that provide free storage.
- Special charges for e-discovery support at some vendors.
- Special charges for migrating away from some SaaS vendors.

Summary

The main strengths of SaaS archiving are:

- SaaS is much easier and cheaper to install.
- The TCO of SaaS is usually lower than on-premise software, but watch out for services that run up the cost with storage and professional services fees.
- SaaS costs are generally more predictable, subject to the prior caveat about additional fees.
- SaaS allows IT staff to focus on the business issues of archiving rather than on the technology.

Interview with Mimecast

Ferris Research interviewed Mimecast Senior Vice President and General Manager Mary Kay Roberto. Here's what she had to say:

What do you see as the most important advantages of SaaS email archiving vs. on-premise solutions?

Three advantages stand out for SaaS. Installation is very simple and can usually be done in half a day. There are no capital expenditures. Ongoing maintenance, such as the application of security patches, the provision of additional storage, and upgrading software and hardware, is offloaded to the SaaS vendor.

What are the main ways in which email archiving SaaS will evolve over the next five years?

My comments here apply not just to SaaS, but also to on-premise solutions.

The use of policies will be greatly expanded. Policies will define what is archived with far greater granularity; they will help legal holds be done with more subtlety and efficiency. All policies will be applied in real time.

It will also become much easier to extract data from archives to satisfy e-discovery document requests. Today the process is rather unwieldy, using PSTs. The EDRM group is doing interesting XML-based work here that will probably become widely deployed.

Finally, I think there will be a lot of innovations in analytical tools that help you digest what's in the archive. MetaLINC and Attenex are early players in this field. There is substantial information in the metadata stored in the archive that can be analyzed and presented to business users.

Briefly, what are the key design considerations in the Mimecast architecture, from an email archiving point of view?

The key design goals are:

- Multi-tenant storage, for confidentiality, integrity, and availability.
- Centralized management of policy.
- Query response typically below 1 second.
- Self-healing replication.
- Maintain service-level commitments regardless of failure (loss of disks, nodes, servers, or even an entire data center).
- The ability to archive not just the email but also metadata and details of all relevant email policies.
- Tenant data isolation and encryption.

- Broad search, sort, and filtering criteria.
- Storage of full forensic trace data—in particular, the ability to hold copies of both receipt and delivery versions of the email.

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About Mimecast

Mimecast is a rapidly expanding Software as a Service (SaaS) company that provides a new option for companies to manage critical data more cost effectively, securely, and efficiently than traditional on-premise hardware and software solutions. Unified Email Management, an innovative and holistic approach created purposely for the SaaS environment, makes email more useful and productive as a business tool, consolidates the sprawling email infrastructure stack, delivers enterprise-grade software services, and empties server rooms to facilitate the green IT environment in corporations. Mimecast manages millions of emails and documents for thousands of companies around the world every day.

Unified Email Management

Unified Email Management is a suite of SaaS services for Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Exchange, and mobile applications that provides holistic risk management for the email environment encompassing email archiving, continuity, security, e-discovery, and data leak protection. Mimecast's online technology platform integrates easily into the most sophisticated corporate IT environment, requiring no hardware, software, or capital expense. Designed on a parallel grid storage architecture and including comprehensive hygiene and policy enforcement capabilities, Mimecast Unified Email Management is highly secure, fully redundant, and scales continuously with businesses' growth.

Mimecast offers a full line of benefits for managing the email environment:

Lower Cost: Most companies today have fragmented, complex, and expensive email infrastructures. Leveraging a purpose built, multi-tenant SaaS architecture, Mimecast's Unified Email Management bundles those services together and rids dependencies on third parties, which significantly lowers cost.

Archiving and Storage: Email has evolved to become the preferred form of communication in today's business, so archiving such data is pivotal. Effective email archiving creates a complete record of communication both within and outside businesses, but it can become expensive and vulnerable to risks. Mimecast's online archiving solution is affordable, secure, and requires less maintenance than traditional in-house archiving methods.

Continuity: Email downtime is a source of aggravation, lost productivity, reputation risk, potential regulatory consequence, and lost trade. In the event of an email outage, Mimecast protects the uptime of email services and data access, allowing companies to stay connected and work uninterrupted.

Security: Protecting data and preventing invasions is critical to the security of a business. Mimecast's extensive business consulting competence helps corporations manage and secure their data with innovative and advanced data leak prevention, content filtering, anti-spam and anti-virus software.

For more information on Mimecast, visit www.mimecast.com.

Ferris Research

Ferris Research is a market research firm specializing in messaging, electronic content control, compliance, e-discovery, and data leak prevention. To help clients track the technology and spot important developments, Ferris publishes reports, white papers, bulletins, and a news wire; organizes conferences and surveys; and provides customized consulting.

In business since 1991, we enjoy an international reputation as the leading firm in our field and have by far the largest and most experienced research team in our core competencies. Our clients include 300 of the world's 1,000 largest organizations as well as computer vendors from the largest corporations to small startups.

While other analysts have come and gone, we have published more than 200 formal reports and 1,100 short bulletins since 1991. Our news service covers more than 2,000 highly specialized announcements annually. In short, our technology and industry depth helps you understand today's products, where they've come from, and where they're going.

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