Message saved

Selecting and protecting the right e-mail system for your business   **Interviewed by Chelan David**

I n today's electronic world, e-mail is crucial to the success of any business. Propelled by its ease of use, swiftness, ability to transcend time zones and low cost, this relatively new method of communication now serves as the backbone of many businesses' day-to-day activities.

"In this day and age, most communication is being handled through e-mail," says Hormazd Dalal, president of Castellan Inc. "I would say that 80 percent of business communication is now handled by e-mail. Basically, you cut yourself off if your e-mail system goes down."

Smart Business spoke with Dalal about how businesses can determine which e-mail system is best for them and what type of e-mail recovery solutions businesses should have in place.

What kinds of e-mail systems are available?

Corporations and small businesses typically set up their own mail server. This means that the mailboxes are stored on that server and it is stored locally in the business.

Having their own server makes it easy for them to collaborate between one user and another. It also enables them to back up their mail, and for confidentiality issues, keep it onsite.

The typical home user subscribes to a POP (point of protocol) service, where the mailbox is housed somewhere on the Internet on a server. This is not advisable for businesses because it means that mail is scattered all over the company.

Last, there are big companies like Microsoft, Yahoo and Google who offer Web-based mail that you can access through the (Internet), but the mail is stored on their servers. Microsoft has Hotmail, Google has Gmail and Yahoo has their own mail system.

For businesses, which system is best and why?

The best system for businesses is to

Hormazd Dalal
President
Castellan Inc.

have your own mail server. Out of the business systems, the best-seller is Microsoft Exchange, and hands down, it has the largest market share.

The reason for this is because users access their mail via Outlook, which is the No. 1 mail client in the world.

There are also other products made by Oracle, and specifically, Novell, which makes a product called GroupWise, and IBM, which makes Lotus Notes.

These are the main business systems, and having your own mail server is best.

How should viruses and spam be handled?

For business users, one must protect the server at the gateway — where mail comes into it.

There are many products that filter messages before they even get to the user's mailbox. Spam is something that is new, but there are many products out there that analyze and tag spam before it gets to the user's mailbox. The user then has the ability to manage it by using the native features of the e-mail system.

What e-mail recovery solution should a business have in place?

You should be backing up your mail server and the information store. There are several ways of backing up. Typically you back up the entire information store.

The problem with this is that if you just need to recover one or two messages, you run into the issue of having to restore the entire database.

One way around this is to implement what we call brick-level backups, which back up each individual mailbox separately. The other way is that most new mail systems have retention policies on them.

So if you hit the delete key, you can set a retention that ensures that the e-mail is not actually deleted out of the server for 90 days. This way, any mail that has been deleted manually within the past 90 days can still be recovered.

How do you see e-mail systems evolving over the next several years?

The new tools that are being implemented make it very easy for users to access their e-mail from remote devices. Currently, most corporate users can access their mail from any computer in the world. Many people can even have access from their PDAs and cell phones.

Things will be evolving where you will be able to access your entire mailbox through a small device that you hold in your hand. You will probably be able to do it through your car very soon.

In the future, I think viruses will automatically be protected (against), spam will be automatically filtered and mail will be available on numerous devices. You will be able to check e-mail in your car, on your cell phone, on your PDA and last but not least, from any computer anywhere.

HORMAZD DALAL is president of Castellan Inc. Reach him at (818) 789-0088, ext. 202 or hormazd@castellan.com.

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