



Reducing dependency on PST files

Email management is an important policy for businesses to implement since most correspondence nowadays is done via an email service and therefore important information pertaining to an organization's trade is stored in users' email inboxes.

Email storage is an issue that businesses have to deal with as emails are continually expanding in use and in size especially with the increased use of attachments. It is important from a compliance and reliability perspective that all company emails are stored and can be recovered should the need arise.

PST problems

Microsoft Outlook data can be stored on local computers in PST files (personal storage table files); however, these files are well-known to administrators as being problematic due to size limitation and usability perspective. Yet, despite the headaches that they cause, they are still widely used by organizations that rely on them heavily for their local email data storage and remain the main source to retrieve old emails.

In Outlook 2003 and 2007, the storage limit for a single user's PST file has increased from the 2GB limit (in ANSI format) to 20GB (Unicode) however files that are too large will cause performance problems for the user. There is also a risk that data in the file will be corrupt due to large file size and this is not recommended. To avoid that, administrators can limit the .pst file size but in turn are creating more and more .pst files which need to be backed up. Either way, .pst files remain a problem. Repairing .pst files is possible but requires time and someone within the organization who is comfortable working with these files – and not all SMBs have a full time IT administrator with the necessary expertise.

If a company does not want to rely on PST files but does not invest in archiving software, then their other option would be to increase storage on the server which is a costly affair and not the ideal solution. Storing all emails on the Exchange server would slow it down and its resources would not be used to their maximum effect. However, even if a company does use PST files to store their email correspondence, there is no guarantee that these will work especially if the company does not have a PST backup policy in place.

Busch Consulting, Inc.

Information Security & Network Solutions

www.buschconsulting.com – Phone: 808.941.3695 – Fax: 808.545.4005



White Paper: Reducing dependency on PST files

Most network administrators do not have the time or resources to collect hundreds of PST files scattered around the company that need to be backup, and especially in a larger company some are easy to miss. Therefore, whilst PST files do offer decent storage options for self-employed people or organizations with a staff count of no more than 10, larger organizations would need to look into archiving software to ensure that their emails are suitably stored and can be recovered within a short period of time.

According to a survey conducted by GFI in 2008 among small and medium-sized businesses in the UK, 51% of respondents do not have an email archiving system in place, with 23% relying on end-users to take the decision to store their own emails. However, 68% recognized email archiving as being an important feature in a business.

Causes of PST problems

The setbacks with PST files stem from both hardware and software issues, thus the chances of Outlook PST files getting corrupted or damaged and therefore unusable are rather high.

Because PST files are often stored on the local hard drive, any problems with the hardware could result in a loss of all stored data. However, even if the Outlook PST file is saved on the network server, there could still be problems because of a faulty networking device. If the PST file is accessed from a client computer through the network, any devices constituting the network links (such as cables, routers, hubs, etc.) that have problems could result in the pst file becoming corrupt. Moreover, a power failure, occurring whilst accessing PST files could leave them damaged and unusable. .

Many Outlook PST file corruptions also occur due to software related issues such as a file system recovery process that is handled incorrectly. So even if an attempt at recovery is made there is no guarantee that the files recovered will not be corrupt. This could happen because the original PST files would have been permanently lost or damaged due to the file system crash and therefore the recovery would not be complete or useful.

Also, any files may be saved with a PST extension, despite their content; however, these files will be recovered based on this extension regardless, and therefore contain no relevant data of the Outlook files. Another error could also stem from the recovery software or expert employed to recover these files, where, having collected the correct data blocks for the PST file, would not combine them in the right order, thus making the recovered files useless.

Busch Consulting, Inc.

Information Security & Network Solutions

www.buschconsulting.com – Phone: 808.941.3695 – Fax: 808.545.4005



White Paper: Reducing dependency on PST files

Email archiving – the solution to PST problems

To steer clear of PST problems and avoid any dilemmas that can occur as a result of unrecoverable files, the best solution available is to install an email archiving solution.

Email archiving enables the archiving of all internal and external email into single or multiple databases, heavily reducing reliance on PST files. This gives users the ability to access and restore past emails in an easy and quick manner. Email archiving also serves to meet the requirements of email retention policies and helps to fulfill regulatory email storage requirements such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. By archiving emails the need to have PST files is eliminated as copies of all emails are stored on a separate server, usually an SQL database. Therefore even if the email is deleted from the local computer by its user, a copy can still be found in the archive.

Email archiving provides secure storage that is searchable and through which emails are easily and quickly recoverable. It helps administrators maintain an archive of all email correspondence, significantly reduces the demands on the Exchange server, manages and reduces a company's dependency on PST files and also meets a growing number of regulations on compliance, eDiscovery and other legislation.

For more information please contact us:

Busch Consulting, Inc

810 Richards St

Suite 600

Honolulu, HI 96813

Telephone: 808.941.3695

Fax: 808.545.4005

www.buschconsulting.com

Busch Consulting, Inc.

Information Security & Network Solutions

www.buschconsulting.com – Phone: 808.941.3695 – Fax: 808.545.4005