

CASE STUDY

More Efficient With Email

Hosted Service Provider Offers Legal Firm What It Needs

by Sue Hildreth

BUSINESSES HAVE ALWAYS had to scramble to reopen and get back to business when disaster strikes. The amount of downtime that customers consider to be acceptable has shrunk significantly, and today's Internet-driven markets expect an organization to be sending emails and answering the phone within hours of a major natural disaster. That is a feat that is hard to pull off when the mail servers are in the epicenter of the disaster.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, it temporarily brought down the email at Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, a Louisiana-based corporate law firm with 160 employees and three offices, including one in New Orleans. Naturally, email was the primary way the legal staff exchanged documents and information, and it was nearly impossible for them to conduct business without email service and the many digital documents they needed for active cases.

Left Behind

When Katrina came through, causing massive damage to New Orleans, the staff there evacuated, along with quite a few of the firm's clients. They also had to leave behind the email servers and backup tapes. When the law firm needed to get the email back up and running elsewhere, it had to go back to New Orleans with an armed guard to retrieve everything from flooded downtown New Orleans.

It took three days for the law firm to get completely back online with all up-to-date emails and files. For Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, that three days was far too long for comfort.

"When talking about a law firm with 50 or 60 lawyers and 160 total end users, there are many time-sensitive deals and contracts, and email is usually how all of those important documents and contracts

are sent. Any interruption to the email can cause a lot of problems," says Luke Corley, IT manager at Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson.

To avoid a repeat of the Katrina experience, Corley began looking at other options for backing up and restoring email. At about the same time as he was looking into disaster recovery options, Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson suffered another email outage—albeit a much shorter one—when the antispam appliance that filters incoming emails decided to go on strike for several hours, holding hostage all of the incoming email.

"For whatever reason, the spam appliance was holding onto the mail after it was received, for up to six hours," Corley says. "People were yelling that they needed an email to close a deal or whatever, but

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since the email was technically received by our side, there wasn't anything we could really do except wait."

Finding The One-Stop Shop

The law firm decided that the best option would be to get out of the business of managing email altogether and outsource it to a service provider. Corley went looking for an alternative to the firm's current email appliance.

After looking at a few options, Corley selected Mimecast's Unified Email Management for Exchange (www.mimecast.com) to provide email management services, which includes automatic backup of email and attachments; security and policy enforcement; and discovery, archiving, and business continuity features.

The three law offices now all connect to Mimecast, and email is stored offsite at the Mimecast data center. IT can manage the email settings from a single administrative console and can opt to expand or reduce the amount of storage the law firm is using. End users can access their email via Outlook, BlackBerry phones, or a Web client, and they can drag-and-drop email between Outlook and the Mimecast archive, so accessing archived email is simple and fast.

Antispam and antivirus scanning is handled on the Mimecast side so that malware never gets to the clients' locations—a useful feature for companies that are covered by retention requirements and have to grapple with whether and how long to retain spam or other unwanted emails. The service satisfied Corley's desire to have a one-stop shop for email management.

"Now our email will maintain its presence regardless of what happens at our location. Our office could blow away, but our email will still be up, and our clients can still get in touch with us," Corley says. "We can log in to a Web portal and can continue to service our clients. We don't have to shuffle tapes around. We just pay a flat fee and it's done, like data insurance."

Outsourcing Makes E-Discovery Faster

Beyond the basic requirements for storage, antispam, and virus protection, the Mimecast service also met Corley's needs for document retention and storage. Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson handles a range of corporate legal affairs, including commercial litigation, finance and labor law, and real estate and tax issues, so it has to have a reliable email retention and archival plan to be able to provide legally required documents for any discovery request. A failure to do so could cause the company to be hit with heavy fines. In addition to the difficulty of selecting, implementing, and managing an email archival system, the basic task of recovering documents is time-consuming.

Corley estimates that the average amount of time it takes him to do a legal discovery of email using the older, on-premises email system is four to five hours for a simple discovery request. It requires fetching the backup tapes, mounting them, conducting the searches,

and then confirming the emails are the correct ones before restoring them.

With a hosted system such as Mimecast, however, Corley says searches take just a few seconds because the archive is always online and available for searching. "You just pull up the date range you want and do a full index search," he says.

The law firm is also beginning a migration to Exchange 10, which Corley says will allow the firm to access some of the higher-level features that Mimecast offers, including more specialized e-discovery tools and automated legal holds that can be placed on emails to prevent their deletion, plus integration of voice messages with email.

More Time For Other Projects

In addition to the move to Exchange 10, Corley is also working on rolling out new workstations to employees. It is extra work he would have had trouble making time for without the Mimecast email service.

He credits outsourcing of the email system with freeing up his time enough to get all of the other projects finished faster. "This year I'm involved in email conversion [and] we're rolling out new workstations. I've got nine months' worth of straight work," he says.

"Before Mimecast, I had to manage it all, so I was constantly having to check from the house to make sure there were no delays in the antispam filter [and] see if everything was up. At night I'd be awake worrying about what was going on," Corley says. Now, he says, he doesn't have to worry as much because he has an extra security blanket. ■

Physics Professors Create First-Ever Antilaser

Scientists at Yale University have constructed the first antilaser. The invention comes more than 50 years after the first conventional lasers. Through the efforts of Yale Physics Professor A. Douglas Stone and his colleagues, the team built what is called a CPA, or Coherent Perfect Absorber.

Hui Cao, professor of applied physics and physics at Stanford University, and her group collaborated with Stone to direct two frequency-specific laser beams at a silicon wafer to create a "loss medium," basically canceling out each laser's light beams. The light rays are eventually absorbed in the wafer and turned into heat, but other materials can scatter the light to produce near perfect absorption. The implications of these results point toward the future use of antilasers to function in devices such as the first optical computers or optical switches, modulators, and detectors in semiconductor integrated optical circuits.

"Our work might be used for the development of optical switches, modulators, logic gates, and transistors for silicon photonics," Cao says. "But more work needs to be done before we make any definite claims."

In the radiology field, CPAs might be applied to electromagnetic radiation. Specifically, radiation could target a human tissue for the purpose of therapy or imaging, according to Stone.

The Future Is Bright

The first CPA is 1cm across, but forthcoming models could measure at six microns, based on current computer simulations. As with any experimental phase, the CPA has its own limitations, though. For instance, the CPA is able to absorb 99.4% of incoming light. Ideally, more sophisticated CPAs will absorb 99.999%. The team also anticipates that the



CPA will eventually be able to absorb visible light and infrared frequencies.

"We expect the coherent perfect absorption can be realized in various complex systems, and hope it will evolve rapidly. . . . What we have demonstrated is a new concept that opens doors to many applications, some of them we are not familiar with," Cao says.

In terms of continued breakthroughs in multiple fields of study, Cao says greater exposure of the CPA discovery will foster more research and practical application. "We hope our paper . . . reach[es] a wide range of readers who will start thinking about the application of this new concept to the technologies they are currently developing," Cao says.

by Joanna Clay

Mimecast Unified Email Management For Exchange

A hosted email service that provides a single solution for email security, spam protection, storage, and mailbox management. The service includes email continuity to ensure email uptime during an outage; security against spam, viruses, phishing attempts, and data leaks; archiving of emails for up to 10 years; and integration with Outlook.

"Now our email will maintain its presence regardless of what happens at our location. Our office could blow away, but our email will still be up, and our clients can still get in touch with us," says Luke Corley, IT manager at Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson.

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