



# DEATH TO PST FILES

A SYMANTEC HOSTED  
SERVICES WHITE PAPER



## Introduction

Email is one of your company's most critical—and most widely used—assets. According to a 2009 study by The Radicati Group, the average corporate email user sends and receives 167 email messages per day. The report estimates that this number will increase to 219 messages per day by 2013.<sup>1</sup>

This steady flow of email messages means managing email is more difficult than ever. A company must provide employees constant access to their email accounts and manage copies of every important email to comply with regulatory requirements. If a company is faced with a lawsuit, it must have the ability to easily place legal holds on emails and conduct efficient e-discovery.

Since email is the source of so much vital information, users are reluctant to delete old messages, which turns their email system into a personal email filing cabinet. In essence, users create their own email archives using PST files.

Most companies impose quotas that limit the amount of storage each person can use for emails. Without these quotas, server disk drives would overflow and email systems would crash.

## The Problems with PST Files

A Personal Storage Table, or PST, is used in Microsoft Outlook to store email messages, calendar items and other data usually kept in Outlook. In contrast to normal Microsoft Exchange Server information, which is stored on a server and accessed by Outlook, a PST file is typically stored on a user's local hard disk or, in a corporate environment, on a file server. Users often employ PST files to circumvent server storage quotas.

Because these personal folders are stored on individual work stations rather than on a centralized server, they can present vexing management challenges and business risks. Here are five common problems that occur when corporate employees use PST files:

### **1. PST files contain business-critical information, yet they are housed locally.**

The increasing need for organizations to retain, search for and retrieve enterprise email can be undermined by the local use of PST files, which may contain personnel data, customer information, product and marketing plans or corporate financial data. Having these files housed on end users' computers makes it nearly impossible for corporate IT personnel to store, find and manage the important business information that the files contain.

Every email that disappears into the "black hole" of PST files takes a piece of the company's knowledge with it. If the file's owner leaves the company, the information in the PST file might never return to company control. A PST file stored on a laptop is unlikely to be encrypted, so if the laptop is lost or stolen, a thief would have ready access to the email stored in the machine.

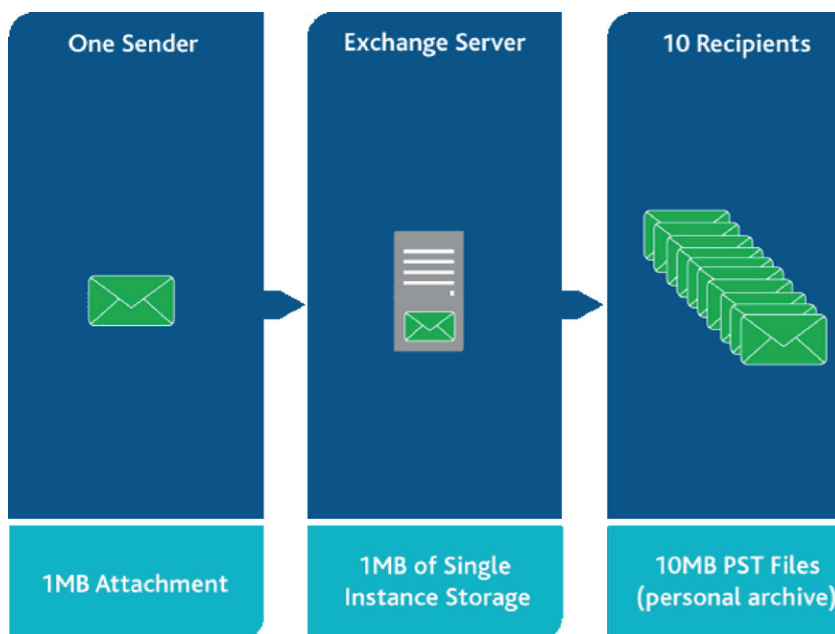
## WHAT IS A PST FILE?

PST STANDS FOR PERSONAL STORAGE TABLE. A PST FILE IS USED BY MICROSOFT OUTLOOK TO STORE EMAIL MESSAGES, CALENDAR ITEMS AND OTHER OUTLOOK DATA. IN CONTRAST TO NORMAL MICROSOFT EXCHANGE SERVER INFORMATION, WHICH IS STORED ON A SERVER AND ACCESSED BY OUTLOOK, A PST FILE IS TYPICALLY STORED ON A USER'S LOCAL HARD DISK OR (MORE OFTEN IN A CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT) ON A FILE SERVER. USERS OFTEN EMPLOY PST FILES TO CIRCUMVENT SERVER STORAGE QUOTAS.

## 2. PST files have a huge impact on storage and backup.

Most employees who use personal folders have multiple copies of documents stored in their PST files. Multiply that situation by hundreds of messages per user and hundreds or thousands of employees, and the impact on enterprise storage requirements is enormous.

Also, any opened PST file requires a full backup, even if the file has only been viewed. Since the combined size of all employees' PST files can easily reach hundreds of gigabytes or even terabytes, the files can affect the capacity and performance of an enterprise's backup servers.



EVEN WHEN PST FILES AREN'T COMPLETELY LOST, THEY CAN CAUSE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS, FOR EXAMPLE WHEN MULTIPLE USERS AT ONCE CONTACT THE COMPANY'S HELP DESK TO ATTEMPT TO RECOVER CORRUPTED PST FILES, THESE TIES-UP VALUABLE RESOURCES WHO COULD BE WORKING ON MORE STRATEGIC PROJECTS.

## 3. PST files are prone to data loss or corruption.

When their maximum two-gigabyte size is pushed to the limit, PST files are vulnerable to data corruption. Unfortunately, they also have limited recovery capability, so corruption can cause permanent data loss. Corruption of local or removable storage media that contain personal folders can also cause a permanent loss of data if the files aren't subject to standard backup processes—a situation that is all too common with laptops.

Even when PST files aren't completely lost, they can cause significant problems, for example when multiple users at once contact the company's help desk to attempt to recover corrupted PST files, these ties-up valuable resources who could be working on more strategic projects.



#### 4. PST files can be an e-discovery nightmare.

Information contained in a PST file is considered a business record and is subject to discovery requirements, just like email. But the dispersed storage of personal folders makes it difficult for organizations to safely identify and destroy documents that no longer need to be kept for legal or business reasons.

PST files can also increase the cost and effort of litigation discovery. Administrators must ask individual users to manually identify email messages in files that are relevant to the litigation; put a hold on those messages; and produce those files when they're needed for discovery. Because information stored locally is difficult to locate and collect, this manner of collection is labor-intensive and prone to errors.

#### 5. PST files can elude enterprise-retention policies.

Any organization that doesn't address the risk-management issues of PST files is in danger of losing critical business information. Organizations that have a fixed data-retention period (e.g., 90 days) but also allow users to create PST files inadvertently encourage ad hoc archiving. In this situation, individual users may save their data for longer periods than specified by corporate policies.

This unmanaged archiving makes it difficult to comply with regulatory requirements and it could subject an organization to charges of data spoliation (failure to adequately preserve electronic evidence) during litigation.

## The Advantages of Email Archiving

IT departments that don't have an email archiving solution in place may spend a disproportionate amount of time and resources managing email and responding to time-consuming search and retrieval requests from corporate compliance and legal departments, the office of the CIO and company employees.

As email volumes grow rapidly, archiving solutions can solve a number of problems, including controlling and managing the spiralling growth of email messages; ensuring that all users adhere to corporate-communication policies; maintaining a trail of information exchanges in the event of litigation; allowing organizations to comply with government document retention regulations; and helping guard against data loss.<sup>2</sup>

**"ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD CONSIDER USING [EMAIL ARCHIVING] SERVICE PROVIDERS TO HELP THEM QUICKLY IMPLEMENT INTERIM OR PERMANENT SOLUTIONS WITHOUT HEAVY UPFRONT INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY OR INTERNAL EXPERTISE. CONSIDER USING A SERVICE PROVIDER FOR NOT JUST ARCHIVING, BUT ALSO FOR EMAIL CONTINUITY, VIRUS PROTECTION AND SPAM FILTERING."**<sup>3</sup>

Gartner, Inc., 2009



## The Symantec Hosted Services Hosted Email Archiving Service

Symantec Hosted Services Hosted Email Archiving is a hosted service designed to help companies address the challenges of email storage management, legal discovery and regulatory compliance. The service safely archives internal and external emails while providing privacy and data security. It also provides rapid, on-demand access to emails after they have been archived.

The service's key components combine secure, single-instance storage for emails with search and retrieval. Internal and external email communications are automatically captured and encrypted using SSL and AES encryption technologies while in transit and while stored in redundant off-site data centers.

End users can use the service to search and restore emails in their personal archives via Microsoft Outlook or through a secure, web-based interface. Administrators can search globally or they can delegate limited access to other users.

The Symantec Hosted Services Email Archiving Service can help meet the email management requirements of various stakeholders:

**Email Storage Management:** Attachment stubbing allows IT to meet the needs of end users by essentially removing quotas from their mailboxes and providing archives that can easily be searched through Outlook or a web browser. The solution scales easily to add new users as needed.

**Cost Containment:** The service can be set up quickly, it is easy to implement, and it doesn't require dedicated staff. Total cost of ownership is typically lower than an on-premise solution that requires significant up-front investments for purchase and deployment as well as ongoing costs for administration, storage, backup, capacity management and high availability. Costs are predictable, which enables effective budgeting.

**Compliance:** The service allows administrators to control retention policies according to user, group or message; provides optional supervision and review capabilities; and makes it easy to implement legal holds. In addition, every policy change is recorded, providing an audit trail.

**Legal Discovery:** The service enables a company's legal team to conduct search and retrieval of emails and various types of attachments based on a broad range of criteria or search terms. Bounded global search capability can be delegated to legal staff or managers.

When a company employs the Symantec Hosted Services Email Archiving Service, users benefit from large email inboxes and are at significantly less risk of exceeding their storage quota, which eliminates the main reason that they create PST files. Once the service is in place, IT can minimize the creation of new PST files and help users migrate data in existing PST files to the new archive.

To learn more about the Symantec Hosted Services Archiving Service, visit us online at <http://www.messagelabs.com/products/archiving>

**"EMAIL ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS ARE BECOMING MUST-HAVES FOR ALL ORGANIZATIONS TO HELP PRESERVE AND MANAGE THE GROWING VOLUME OF EMAILS. EMAIL ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS PROVIDE INTERACTIVE, LONG-TERM STORAGE OF EMAIL IN A SEPARATE FILE STORE, WITH EASY SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL CAPABILITIES."**<sup>4</sup>

The Radicati Group,  
October 2009

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Email Archiving Market, 2009-2013, The Radicati Group, October 2009. (<http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Email-Archiving-2009-EXEC-SUMMARY1.pdf>).
2. Ibid.
3. Outsourcing E-Mail Archiving: 2Q09 Update, Adam W. Couture, Gartner, Inc., April 27, 2009.
4. Email Archiving Market, 2009-2013, The Radicati Group, October 2009. (<http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Email-Archiving-2009-EXEC-SUMMARY1.pdf>).

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