Exchange Managed Folders versus SharePoint for Email Records Management

This white paper discusses Microsoft Exchange Managed Folders versus SharePoint for email records management. It offers several considerations for evaluating email records management strategies and provides an outline of 3 Zone Email Management. The white paper details the limitations of Managed Folders and the benefits of SharePoint for email records management and recommends SharePoint for Zone 2 and 3 email records management.

Intended Audience

This white paper is intended for IT, Enterprise Content Management and Records Management professionals in organizations that are considering either Exchange Managed Folders or SharePoint for email records management.

Email Records Management: Microsoft Exchange Managed Folders or SharePoint?

Increasingly, companies and organizations are assessing their email and records management strategies, particularly as Microsoft SharePoint 2010 and Exchange 2010 upgrades are being undertaken worldwide. As organizations look to adopt SharePoint 2010 for enterprise records management, there has been considerable discussion around the use of Exchange Managed Folders and their suitability for storing email in records management scenarios.

This white paper discusses the use and limitations of Exchange Managed Folders versus SharePoint for email records management.

What are Exchange Managed Folders?

An Exchange Managed Folder is a folder in a user's mailbox to which messaging records management (MRM) has been applied. There are two types of managed folders: "managed default folders" (such as the Inbox) appear, by default, in a user's Office Outlook mailbox; "managed custom folders" are created by Exchange administrators specifically for MRM. The retention and journaling of messages in managed folders are controlled by managed content settings that are applied to the folder. Managed folders rely on users to select messages for retention, and move the email to the appropriate folder. Exchange Managed Folders were introduced in Exchange Server 2007 and are also available in Exchange 2010.

Auto-Copy to SharePoint Feature - Deprecated from Exchange 2010

Exchange 2007 provided a feature than enabled emails stored in a Managed Folder to be automatically copied to a SharePoint document library. The deprecation of the auto-copy to SharePoint feature from Exchange 2010 has caused a lot of confusion in the industry regarding Managed Folders and their suitability for enterprise- grade email records management. Without the auto-copy to SharePoint feature, Exchange Managed Folders must be viewed on their own as a method for email records management.

What is Email Records Management?

While this topic could fill a white paper on its own, it's important to briefly describe what is meant by "Email Records Management." Email is increasingly the predominant form of communication both within and between organizations. Therefore, email must be managed like any other type of content in the organization. Compliance requirements, litigation, legal holds and security are all considerations that require organizations to look closely at their email management strategy.

For example, organizations are required to provide documentation to regulatory agencies to prove they are complying with the appropriate regulations, laws and standards, and they must be able to effectively search their records management system to produce evidence for

litigation (e-Discovery). Much of the documentation that is required could be contained inside the body of an email or as an attachment to an email.

Email Management Considerations

The following are some important considerations when evaluating email records management strategies:

1) **Retention.** ARMA defines the "Principle of Retention" as an organizations requirement to maintain its records and information for an appropriate time, taking into account legal, regulatory, fiscal, operational and historical requirements. Typically, organizations will have different retention categories depending on the content of the email or document.

2) **Disposition.** ARMA defines the "Principle of Disposition" as the secure and appropriate disposition (destruction) of records (including email) that are no longer required to be maintained by applicable laws and the organization's own policies.

3) **Storage.** Will email records be stored on their own in a separate email repository or along with the organizations other electronic records in a central repository? Email typically includes both the email message itself as well as any attachments associated with that email, such as Office documents or PDFs. For compliance reasons, often the email and attachments must be kept together as an integral unit when filing as a record. Therefore, a strategy that allows all records to be stored centrally makes sense for many organizations.

4) **Legal Holds.** The records management system must provide for the ability to place a legal hold on certain records, whether those records are email or other document types. This involves preventing deletion or editing of records by users or by other automated systems.

5) **Metadata.** Metadata is literally the "data about the data." Important metadata for email includes information regarding the sender, the receiver, sent date, subject and so on. It may also include specific organizational data such as client or project name. Metadata is important to capture along with the record, so that the documents are easy to find for e-discovery, litigation and collaboration.

6) **Collaboration.** If the email records need to be shared or accessed by other team members as part of a project, matter or program, then moving emails out of Personal Mailbox Folders and into a central repository will be required.

7) **Centralized Search.** The ability to facilitate a centralized search capability for email records may be severely compromised if emails are stored in Personal Mailbox Folders rather than a central repository. This requirement will greatly influence the type of email records management strategy deployed.

8) **Cost.** Of course costs are always a consideration and organizations need to evaluate the cost of the overall solution, including administration, maintenance and future support.

Three Zone Email Management
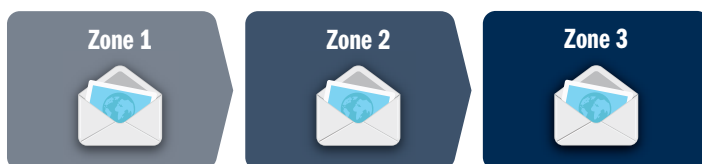
Before looking more closely at Managed Folders, it's important to look at the overall approach being taken by organization in managing email records. Many organizations are adopting the three-zone approach as a best practice for email record management. Simply stated, the three zone approach is:

- **Zone 1:** Emails are automatically deleted from a user's personal inbox after a set time period unless the user marks the email for further use. The common time period is 90 days. This keeps a user's inbox relatively small and current.

- **Zone 2:** Emails in this zone have corporate value, but are not yet records. These emails should be either deleted or declared as a record at some point.

- **Zone 3:** These emails are records and are stored in an enterprise records repository.

Note: The recommendation of this white paper is that emails in Zones 2 and 3 should be stored and managed in SharePoint and not in Managed Folders.

Principles of Disposition and Retention

It is important to understand why Managed Folders are not suitable as an enterprise email records repository (Zone 3). As discussed in a previous section, the American Records Management Association (ARMA) has created Generally Accepted Record keeping Principles (GARP) and two sections are particularly relevant to email records management:

- **Principle of Disposition:** An organization shall provide secure and appropriate disposition for records that are no longer required to be maintained by applicable laws and the organization's policies.
- **Principle of Retention:** An organization shall maintain its records and information for an appropriate time, taking into account legal, regulatory, fiscal, operational, and historical requirements.

Managed Folders and the Principle of Disposition

With Managed Folders, the disposition related functions are simply rules-based deletion for emails in a Managed Folder or rules related to moving emails to other Managed Folders after a set period of time for future deletion. In this regard, Managed Folders are capable of fulfilling the Principle of Disposition requirement.

Managed Folders and the Principle of Retention

In considering Managed Folders and the Principle of Retention, a critical point must be made:

For something to be a record, it needs both retention policies as well as the ability to prevent deletion. Exchange Managed Folders only apply retention polices and cannot prevent a user from knowingly or inadvertently deleting an email record.

For example, a user can move an email to a Managed Folder where a particular retention policy is applied, then go in the next week and knowingly or inadvertently delete the email. Depending on how the Managed Folder has been set up, deleted messages are kept in a Recoverable Items folder and are automatically purged after 14 days, regardless of what the original retention schedule was set on the item via the Managed Folder. Also, if the Recoverable Items folder reaches its warning quota, the Managed Folder assistant automatically purges items in a "first in, first out" order.

For more information: http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ee364755.aspx

Managed Folders do not protect email records from being knowingly or inadvertently deleted and therefore do not fulfill the Principle of Retention requirement.

Issues of Managed Folders Versus SharePoint for Email Records Management

The table below outlines a number of issues regarding the use of Managed Folders rather than SharePoint for email records management:

Issue	Managed Folders	SharePoint
Central repository for all electronic records	Email is handled separately from other content.	All content types including email, documents, spreadsheets, etc. are stored together in a central repository.
Legal Holds	Legal holds for email are handled separately from other content types.	All content types can have a legal hold applied in a similar manner.

Issue	Managed Folders	SharePoint
"Send & File" (automatically file an email as a record while sending)	No "Send & File" capability. Users have to drag the email from their Sent folder to a Managed Folder, decreasing the likelihood of saving the email as a record.	SharePoint/Colligo provides "Send & File" functionality, allowing more emails to be captured as records.
Adding additional metadata to an email	Users cannot add additional metadata, such as Project or Client number, to an email in a Managed Folder.	SharePoint allows additional metadata to be added to an email or attachment, increasing findability and enabling workflows and retention setting.
Filing of an attachment separate from an email	Cannot file attachments separately from an email.	Email and attachments can be filed together or separately with different disposition policies, or an attachment can be filed without the accompanying email.
Multistage retention policy	Multistage retention cannot be set on an email. After its retention expires, an email can only be moved to another folder or deleted. Multistage retention can be set on any email.	As well, a retention policy for an email can be set based on the metadata applied to it, rather than just the folder in which it is stored.
Applying workflow on content that originates as email	No workflow capability.	SharePoint allows workflows to be triggered by email based on where the email is stored, its content type or any other metadata value.
Collaboration and knowledge sharing	Emails filed in Managed Folders are not accessible by anyone other than the individual Mailbox owner.	SharePoint allows team members to access emails and attachment for better project, matter and program management.
User-driven enterprise search	Managed Folder content is stored inside the Exchange Server and requires specialized tools, knowledge and permissions to effectively search across mailboxes for emails.	SharePoint as a centralized records repository with record-level metadata enables extremely effective user-driven enterprise search.
Implementation and ongoing administration overhead	The implementation of Managed Folders has to be done through PowerShell scripts. Microsoft offered a GUI for this in Exchange 2007 but moved to a script interface in Exchange 2010, which some see as a signal that they are de-emphasizing this feature in the Exchange 2010.	SharePoint offers an intuitive GUI for implementation and ongoing administration. Many functions can be enabled by the user, rather than IT.

SharePoint for Zone 2 Email Records Management

It is easy to see that SharePoint is the obvious choice for Zone 3 email records management, but why should you also use SharePoint for Zone 2 email management as opposed to keeping them in Exchange or Managed Folders?

Simple stated, by moving emails out of Exchange and into SharePoint, sooner rather than later, the repository will capture more content upfront, increasing the likelihood of compliance. In addition, the sooner the transition from the personal view of these information assets to the corporate view is made, the more benefits accrue to the organization in terms of better compliance, better collaboration, more effective search and lower eDiscovery costs. The best practice and most effective strategy to get the highest value from an organizations' information assets (email included) is to move the content into a single central repository, sooner rather than later.

Conclusion

While Managed Folders are a viable solution for some basic use-cases, organizations with more sophisticated retention, disposition and compliance requirements will be better served by deploying SharePoint for email records management. Within the context of a 3 Zone email management strategy, it is recommended that SharePoint is used for Zone 2 and Zone 3 email records management.

- SharePoint as a centralized email records repository provides a number of advantages over Managed Folders including:
- secure records retention (no accidental or purposeful deletion)
- complex disposition policies based on different content types
- effective legal holds on both email and attachments
- advanced metadata capabilities for improved search and e-discovery
- advanced workflows triggered via content types or metadata
- reduced IT administration burden and overhead

However, the most significant advantage of SharePoint over Managed Folders is the collaboration and knowledge sharing capabilities that SharePoint provides to an organization. With email now a critical component of an organization's information assets, the ability to store email alongside other types of content in a centralized repository that can be accessed, searched and shared across the enterprise makes SharePoint the ideal platform for email records management. Compared to Managed Folders, SharePoint provides organizations with a superior way to derive the highest value from their information assets and ensure effective compliance.

When SharePoint is combined with Colligo Contributor, users capitalize on the same Outlook folder tree integration and drag-and-drop capabilities offered by Managed Folders, but are moving the email content to SharePoint, where it can be better managed as a record and shared across the organization. Colligo Contributor has been deployed by thousands of organizations worldwide to provide seamless Outlook to SharePoint integration for effective email records management in SharePoint.

To Learn More

For more information or to obtain a trial of Colligo Contributor, go to www.colligo.com. For pricing information or to request a quote, please contact sales@colligo.com or call +1 (866) 685-7962.