

The Case for Cloud-Based Email Services

A Quantix White Paper

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MICROSOFT EXCHANGE - MISSION CRITICAL SOFTWARE

Microsoft Exchange Server is a particularly important part of many companies' infrastructure. It doesn't just handle their email; it may integrate their voice communications and instant messaging. Some organisations use Exchange to provide a single point of access to other data, such as that held in CRM and financial databases. Exchange is the glue that holds their business IT together.

As such, Exchange is one of the most heavily used applications within a business - and that comes with a cost. Mailboxes often add up to more than a gigabyte of data, and voicemail further increases the application's storage needs. The cost of supporting the application can be huge - and rolling out an upgrade across the organisation can be a logistical nightmare. That's one reason a 2009 survey found that over 50 percent of current Exchange Server implementations were still using a legacy version of the software.

That's particularly the case for those upgrading to Exchange Server 2010. This version's costly hardware demands, requiring 64 bit processors and the installation of Windows Server 2008, can deter organisations from moving to the new version. The installation process can be protracted, absorbing IT staff time that could be put to better use.

As Exchange becomes a key point of access to the organisation's data, securing it becomes increasingly important - not only securing it from attack, but also ensuring there is a quick recovery process in the event of any failure. Supporting and securing Exchange has become mission-critical.

THE POTENTIAL OF EXCHANGE CLOUD

Fortunately, three relatively recent technologies in the sphere of distributed technology offer businesses ways to lower the cost and improve the reliability of their Exchange Server implementation - and in the case of disaster, to recover both systems and data more quickly. Quantix has integrated these three technologies into ExchangeCloud, its hosted Exchange solution:

- Cloud computing sees computing time and power as a utility-like resource: multiple users can share the same physical resource base, paying only for what they use. It's like being connected to the grid, instead of having your own generator.
- Software as a service, as practised for instance by CRM provider salesforce.com, hosts the software on the vendor's systems (or a reseller's systems) and allows customers to use it in return for a (typically monthly) fee. There is no need for the software to be installed on servers or clients within the customer organisation, or for IT maintenance and upgrade support to be provided in-house. Using cloud computing, platforms and infrastructure can also be provided as services.
- Virtualisation allows a single server (physical machine) to run multiple software instances with their own operating systems (virtual machines). It severs the link between the software you're running and the machines you run it on. So each client can be provided with all the advantages of their own, dedicated Exchange Server, running on a number of virtual machines.



With the available services and flexibility, it's not surprising that many businesses now prefer to use Managed Service Providers such as Quantix rather than buy and manage their own IT assets. By moving to an MSP, businesses can exchange huge up-front capital costs for a predictable monthly cost, and can focus their IT department on strategic issues that really matter, using the MSP to provide support and business continuity. They get the benefits of Microsoft Exchange - without the costs of providing their own hardware and support function.

HARDWARE AND MANAGEMENT COSTS

A managed cloud based business continuity solution can provide dramatic reductions in the total cost of running Exchange. There is no need to spend money on new servers, on support, or on new skills. The upfront investment in new software, servers and infrastructure can be replaced by a predictable monthly payment, freeing up funds to be deployed in the business.

Quantix will handle all support for Exchange, from monitoring system availability to delivering patches and upgrades. All upgrades are installed within the cloud, not on the client's server. That frees up in-house IT to concentrate on IT strategy which can create real business advantage, rather than carrying out basic maintenance tasks.

Archiving and storage often become fraught issues for companies that manage their own email solutions. Quantix automatically archives emails in the cloud, allowing PST files to be removed from local machines, thus increasing the performance of the client network. Because clients have dedicated, not shared, servers, they are able to set their own archiving policies, to suit their own operational and compliance requirements. If they still need more space, they can add more storage in the cloud at just a few minutes' notice.

ECONOMIES OF SCALE

Because a cloud-based system is a shared service, our customers benefit from reduced costs as key resources are utilised by multiple users. We are able to offer best-of-breed technology, using DoubleTake, VMware, and Juniper. Most importantly, because virtualisation offers a centralised management technology and can achieve better load balancing, we can utilise our resources more effectively than traditional datacentres - leading to lower costs for our customers. We believe that Quantix' ExchangeCloud service can save clients as much as 70% in total cost of ownership over three years. (In fact, a paper from Osterman Research which examined the potential cost savings of a hosted Exchange solution pointed out that cost savings could be as high as 90%).

SCALABILITY

Virtualisation allows seamless scaling up and down, avoiding the need to engineer the system for peak levels of business; extra bandwidth or storage space can be picked up as and when needed. Bandwidth on the CPU, storage devices or network can be allocated on demand.

We have found that some customers are now asking to create additional short-term mirrors of their networks in order to test new applications or upgrades. The bandwidth can be turned on for just a couple of weeks, as cloud computing gives so much more flexibility than with traditional packages. The use of virtual technology also allows expansion in small increments, rather than the relatively lumpy investment that was previously required. For companies that are growing their business, managed cloud-based business continuity systems offer a clear, and cost-effective, expansion path.



SECURITY AND CONTINUITY

If Exchange fails, a business may lose the ability to communicate with its customers and suppliers - it may lose access to some of its data, and could even lose data if files are corrupted.

Using Quantix's ExchangeCloud solution, clients benefit from a highly resilient platform replicated across two separate datacentres, both based outside the M25, and with nightly backups ensuring information is not lost. Alongside ExchangeCloud's built-in archive functions, business communications can be retained for up to seven years and beyond. We guarantee 99.9% availability, and apply the best security practices and programmes in the industry, including anti-virus monitoring at three different levels (in the Websense cloud, on entering the Quantix cloud, and finally at the server layer) and advanced spam protection.

Quantix has built its own infrastructure to the highest standards. By using Virtual Private Clouds, is able to offer its clients strong security at lower cost. Few companies operating their own IT solutions would be able to deploy such advanced security techniques, or recreate the resilience of the ExchangeCloud.

SMOOTHER MIGRATION

Quantix has extensive experience of migrating customers to a cloud-based solution, together with a team of over 30 consultants. Quantix has Microsoft Gold Partner status and is a key development partner of Microsoft, enabling it to provide in-depth support and customisation.

IMPROVED RESILIENCE

By using cloud computing, a single point of failure can be avoided. Virtualisation provides resilience across different physical devices, both within each individual datacentre and between two or more datacentres. This creates a fully resilient environment in which failover of all or any server is possible, as there is total data replication across the cloud, using a private network on the cloud infrastructure.

Quantix staff monitor ExchangeCloud continually, enabling them to spot potential problems before a disaster occurs and ensuring high availability and performance. By using ExchangeCloud, rather than running Exchange on their own servers, clients gain the benefits of improved reliability - without the costs of support.

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MOBILITY

ExchangeCloud is available to clients' staff wherever they are, whether on a corporate site, working at home, or on the road. Quantix ensures mobile access by supporting remote access by devices such as Blackberry, Android or iPhone. Because Quantix is in charge end-to-end, users have a single log-on and password - no frustrating need to log on to different networks. A secure VPN connection allows users access to Exchange, and to integrated systems such as SharePoint, CRM and ERP solutions.



Additionally, the advanced features of 2010 allow effective management of the mobile device fleet further protecting the business, with the ability to 'kill' lost or stolen devices, block those that are unsupported by the business, or effect 'Information Rights Management' a method of protecting the distribution of confidential or protected business information.

COMPLIANCE

Many businesses are required to retain client, financial and other information for a long period, and the maintenance of email archives can become an onerous task and incur high data storage costs. Using ExchangeCloud, mailboxes can be integrated with Outlook 2010 and automatic archiving carried out, helping to meet these regulatory requirements more effectively and at lower cost.

THE MARKET FOR HOSTED MICROSOFT EXCHANGE SERVICES

Software as a Service is a rapidly maturing market, and the market for hosted Exchange is no exception, with Radicati research predicting that the number of Exchange mailboxes delivered via a hosted email service will double to 89 million worldwide in under four years' time. However, not all available services are comparable, since they have varying resources and grades of IT infrastructure underpinning the service itself. Many resellers are focused on the lower end of the market and offering a cookie-cutter solution which is not easily customisable by the client.

One example is Microsoft itself, which has made rapid progress since deciding to adopt the Software as a Service model for some of its corporate products. Microsoft's Business Productivity Online Standard Suite (BPOS) includes Exchange Server, which can be bought individually, but is still restricted to the legacy Exchange 2007 platform and the same restrictions as a shared hosted Exchange environment.

At the bottom of the market a number of ISPs and hosting companies offer shared server basis hosted-email aimed mainly at smaller businesses. Many of these do not offer 24/7 support, and have limited resilience. They generally focus on low price points to win business, with commodity-style flat fees, and many do not offer SLAs; in the case of an outage, clients have no redress.

These smaller players also cannot offer seamless integration of Exchange with their clients' other IT systems. Quantix, on the other hand, has established application management skills in Oracle and SQL Server, as well as other key technologies, and is able to ensure integration of the hosted Exchange Server solution into the client's other IT applications. Quantix' experience in managed services also sets it apart from the increasing number of hosting services which are offering hosted Exchange Server, but do not have the management overlay and integration expertise that Quantix possesses.

We believe technological leadership lies with cloud-based solutions like Quantix's, which can offer enterprise class resilience and flexibility to the mid-sized organisation. In particular, their scalable business model reinforces success - as the number of seats and businesses they support increases, they are able to offer higher levels of service and greater resource to their customers, while remaining cost-effective.



WHO ARE QUANTIX?

Quantix is one of the UK's premier providers of Managed Cloud Services, Application Managed Services and Hosted Infrastructure Solutions for Enterprises and Independent Software Vendors – a true managed Cloud Services Provider.

Our secure, dependable platform and proven application expertise allows us to provision a wide portfolio of both hosted and on-premise application management services that can deliver considerable IT cost savings and de-risk technology investments. Through production-ready services such as Managed Application Hosting, Cloud-based Disaster Recovery, SaaS Enablement and Managed Messaging we are already delivering demonstrable competitive advantage to our clients.

Capitalising on experience gained through supporting over 250 managed services clients, as well as our top-tier relationships with best of breed vendors such as Oracle, Microsoft, Juniper and VMware, Quantix has created an enterprise grade Virtual Private Cloud platform that offers compelling SLAs and flexibility.

WHAT WE SUPPORT:

- Oracle Database 8i, 9i, 10g and 11g
- Oracle RAC
- Oracle Application Server
- Oracle E-Business Suite 10x, 11x, Oracle R12
- Microsoft SQL Server 6.5, 2000, 2005, 2008, MySQL

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