



The IT Guidebook To Evaluating Hosted Exchange Providers

Everything you need to know to choose the right service for your business.



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Introduction

Email has become *THE* mission critical application for businesses large and small. As a growing business continually striving to increase productivity, collaboration and corporate success, you understand the important role that Microsoft Exchange Server plays in any profitable business. Small and mid-size businesses alike see the productivity benefits of utilizing an enterprise-class solution but since many do not have the financial or human resources to bring it in house, more and more of them are turning to a hosted solution.

Are you considering outsourcing your mission critical email? If so, which hosted Microsoft Exchange Server provider is right for your specific needs? As a small or mid-sized business, you need a reliable and reputable hosted Exchange provider to help take your email communication to the next level and grow your business.

This white paper will provide you with the information you will need when speaking with hosted Exchange providers to ensure that you select a provider who is reputable and will recommend a solution that will help increase your corporate profitability and success.

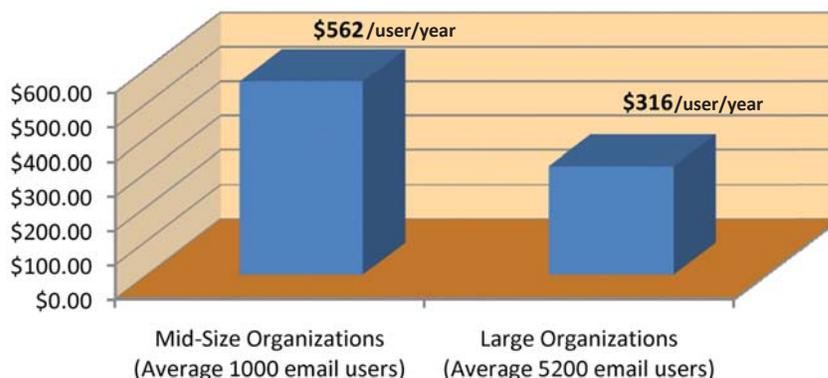
First, let's look at the advantages of using a hosted Exchange provider.

Advantages of Using a Hosted Exchange Provider

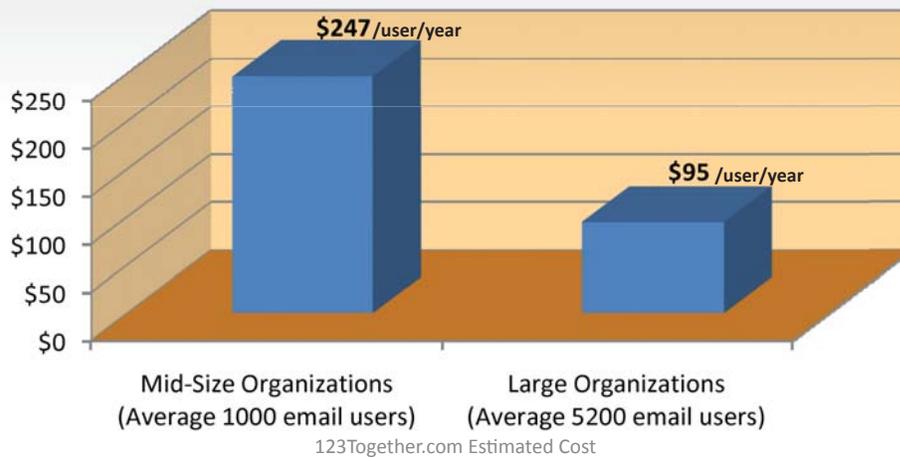
Outsourcing mission critical email communication to a hosted Exchange provider saves companies tens of thousands of dollars in costs including the purchase of new hardware and software, maintenance support contracts, storage costs, hiring and training of new personnel, ongoing administration and maintenance costs and system monitoring including anti-virus and anti-spam filtering.

The following chart contains the expected total cost of ownership of Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 when deployed in-house as reported by analyst firm The Radicati Group vs. the cost of Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 as a hosted solution.

**Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 Total Cost of Ownership: In-House
3 Year Average**



Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 Total Cost of Ownership: Hosted 3 Year Average



Working with a hosted Exchange provider also enables you to be up and running with the latest version of Microsoft Exchange Server in minutes, not weeks or months, when implementing an in-house solution. Hosted Exchange solutions also provide many features and benefits not available with an in-house solution. The following are advantages of transitioning to a hosted Exchange solution.

- Peace of mind provided by an enterprise-class infrastructure that will enable you to access your email and increase corporate productivity immediately for a small monthly fee.
- Custom software designed, tested, and deployed to proactively monitor thousands of Microsoft Exchange servers 24x7x365 to help you focus on higher value projects and not managing boxes.
- Complete maintenance oversight such as rolling out updates and security patches as soon as they are released.
- Advanced anti-virus and anti-spam filtering to stop viruses and hackers in their tracks before they reach your email.
- Web-based control panel for easy account administration.
- Synchronization with wireless handheld devices including BlackBerry, Treo, PocketPC and Windows Mobile to support C-level executives' needs.
- An uptime Service Level Agreement (SLA) showing the hosting providers commitment to customer uptime.

Hosted Exchange Provider Evaluation Checklist

When searching for and evaluating a reliable and reputable hosted Exchange provider, verify that the prospective provider meets the following evaluation checklist criteria:

Technical Support – Your hosted Exchange provider should offer round-the-clock technical support so that you can get your questions answered in real time. Much of today's business is global with employees working across time zones and across the world. If you have a question at 3:00am in New York it is important to know that you can pick up a phone or send an email and have your question answered immediately.



Many hosted Exchange providers are also outsourcing their support staff to countries half way around the world. Problems associated with outsourced support often include language barriers, lack of total understanding of the products and services being supported, and overall lack of communication – the most important aspect of support. It is important to ask the prospective hosting provider for the details of how they will manage your support needs. For example, ask if their technical support is fully based in the United States or another country and if the support staff is employed by them.

Hosted Exchange Expertise – A qualified hosted Exchange provider will have years of experience in the hosting industry with a single-minded focus on hosted Microsoft Exchange Server. Providers who offer web hosting with hosted Exchange Server as a side business are inattentive to the needs of their hosted Exchange customers and will not offer the same level of service and support as a provider dedicated to Exchange hosting services. You also want to ask a provider if they employ technical support representatives, system administrators or developers who are experts in hosted services and hold the title of Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP). Microsoft Certified Professionals are highly trained and qualified hosted Exchange employees who have undergone rigorous testing by Microsoft to ensure that they have achieved a high level of technical expertise.

Scalability – As your company grows so too should the products and services used to support that growth. Your current needs may only require a few mailboxes, but as your organization grows, you may need hundreds of mailboxes, support for larger attachment sizes and increased space to archive your emails. The provider you select should offer both shared and dedicated Exchange server options to accommodate your needs for today and for tomorrow. Both server options offer their own benefits and your hosted Exchange provider will work with you to select the one that is right for your needs.

Guaranteed Uptime – As email has become THE mission critical application for most companies, any amount of downtime can result in lost corporate productivity and ultimately decreased sales. Can you afford to take the risk that your email will be down for an extended period of time? Select a provider that offers a guaranteed Service Level Agreement (SLA) of at least 99.6% uptime but preferably 99.9% uptime. A 99.9% uptime SLA allows for almost 9 hours of unscheduled downtime in a 12 month period. As some downtime is inevitable, a reputable hosted Exchange provider will put their money where their mouth is by offering a money back guarantee should a server be down for an extended period of time.

State-Of-The-Art Data Center – Ideally, the hosted Exchange provider you choose should utilize a modern, state-of-the-art Tier-4 data center for maximum uptime, network connectivity, speed and data security. Tier-1, 2, and 3 data centers do not provide the level of availability or security of a Tier-4 data center, thereby increasing chances of downtime, performance delays and security breaches. A reliable data center provides you with a network that consistently runs at peak efficiency for optimum email performance. Consider security access, temperature (to keep servers from overheating), fire warning and suppression systems, redundant network backbones, generators, and fuel availability for maximum throughput and uptime.

Virus and Spam Protection - Servers are vulnerable to malicious Internet attacks which can cause serious harm to your data and the hosted Exchange provider you choose should take every precaution to ensure your email and data are safe and secure from Internet vulnerabilities, hackers, and network attacks by automatically scanning all emails and attachments on their servers. Spam constitutes a higher percentage of email than ever before. A reliable hosted Exchange provider will utilize advanced server-side anti-spam software to help reduce that spam which the user will receive.

Mobile Device Support – In today's corporate culture of 24x7 availability, many business executives and sales people must remain connected to the office and their customers while at home, on business travel and even on vacation. The hosted Exchange provider you select should offer support for popular mobile devices such as BlackBerry, Treo and Windows Mobile to ensure that you are able to send and receive email in real time and access calendars, tasks and folders while on the road. The service should provide for 2-way wireless synchronization, "pushing" email to your mobile device when new data is received by the server and automatically updating folders such as the "sent" folder. Emails sent from a mobile device will then be available in the "sent" folder of the user's email client without any manual intervention. Users should never have to sync their devices at the end of the day or manually attempt to retrieve data from the server.

Pooled Storage Space – Another way to determine those hosted Exchange providers who stand out from the rest is to ask if they offer pooled storage. Pooled storage space enables a company to allocate more storage space to one user and less to another from the total allotment of space provided, allowing them to take advantage of more of the storage space available to them. For example, a small business has selected a hosted Exchange Server plan with 5 users and 1GB of storage per user totaling 5GB of storage for that company. In a pooled environment, an employee who requires more storage space due to larger attachment sizes or a larger number of emails can be allocated, let's say, 2GB of storage space and the remaining 3GB of storage space can be divided up between the additional 4 employees who require less space.



Backups, Upgrades and Monitoring – One of the reasons to outsource your email to a hosted Exchange provider is so that your IT department can focus on their primary responsibilities and does not have to worry about backups, maintenance and 24 x 7 server monitoring. When was the last time you backed up all of your critical email? Data availability is essential to the success of your business and your data should be backed up daily so that it is easily retrievable.

In addition, Microsoft releases patches and upgrades on a monthly basis and a diligent hosted Exchange provider will install those patches and upgrades within days after their release by Microsoft to ensure that their customers are using the most current, stable and reliable software available. Ask how frequently a hosted Exchange provider installs Microsoft's patches and upgrades.

Microsoft Approved Platform – The Microsoft Solution for Hosted Messaging and Collaboration (HMC) is the only platform that has been designed, tested and validated by Microsoft for Exchange Server hosting. The platform was designed and built by Microsoft to support up to 1 million hosted Exchange mailboxes. You will probably never need 1 million mailboxes but knowing that your provider's hosted Exchange offering runs on a Microsoft approved platform and is easily scalable to your future growth needs is reassuring.

Migration Assistance – Many small and mid-size businesses wishing to upgrade to Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 in-house are discovering that it will be a long, difficult and costly road ahead. Your company may be one of them. As a result, SMBs are choosing to work with hosted Exchange providers so they are able to utilize enterprise-class email without the deployment delays, increased costs and IT headaches. A top notch hosted Exchange provider will offer various levels of free migration assistance based on the email service you choose. They should be flexible, working with you to migrate your data as quickly or as slowly as you require. Transitioning your employees' email at a rate your company can easily absorb is key to making your company's migration as seamless and painless as possible.

Why 123Together.com?

123Together.com is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and the leading provider of Microsoft Exchange Server hosting for customers that consider their email to be mission critical to their business. Public and private companies around the world have chosen 123Together.com for their mission critical e-mail because of our leading enterprise-level infrastructure and single-minded focus on keeping Exchange servers up and running 100% of the time!

After all, Microsoft Exchange Server is a complicated system and needs our undivided attention to deliver on our uptime guarantee. As a reflection of our expertise and focus, we have built our own highly scalable and robust provisioning system with features such as auditing and roll-backs.

123Together.com's unique features:

- Live 24 x 7 technical support via online chat, phone and email. Our technical support experts are 123Together.com employees and are all based at our corporate headquarters in the United States.
- 123Together.com customers can have mailbox sizes up to 15GB.
- Both shared and dedicated server options are available with a 99.9% uptime guarantee on shared servers and a 100% uptime guarantee on dedicated servers.
- Policy-based controls on dedicated servers enable settings on groups of users to be changed collectively with one action.
- 2-way wireless synchronization with 123Together.com's Hosted Exchange Mobile Services for BlackBerry Enterprise Server and Good Messaging Server.
- Fully automated, self service BlackBerry provisioning and troubleshooting via the online control panel.
- Outlook setup tool can be downloaded once and used by all users.
- Daily backups and 24x7 server monitoring and maintenance provided.
- 123Together.com utilizes Internap's Tier-4 data center and its "Performance IP" service which reduces latency and routes customer data over redundant, high-speed backbones to provide faster delivery of emails around the world.
- 123Together.com uses the Microsoft HMC platform – the only platform design, tested and approved by Microsoft for Exchange Server hosting.
- 30-day no obligation trial is available to test drive the full set of hosted Exchange Server features and functionality.
- 123Together.com is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner with specialization in Microsoft's Advanced Infrastructure Solutions Competency.

Get Started Today!

123Together.com offers customizable hosted Exchange plans to suit your individual business needs. With a 30-day no obligation trial, you can be up and running immediately and using the industry-leading Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 as a hosted service from the industry-leading hosted Exchange provider. Visit www.123Together.com to sign up or contact a Hosted Exchange Solution Specialist to answer any questions you may have.

Call (800) 9-MS-EXCHANGE (800-967-3924) to speak to a Hosted Exchange Solution Specialist today.





Contact Information

123Together.com
111 S. Bedford St., Suite 200
Burlington, MA 01803

phone: (781) 273-6245
fax: 781-998-1093

www.123Together.com